Systematicity in German Idealism

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1 Structure of the Preface to PS

§§1–4 (pp. 1–3) The inadequacy of prefaces and the difficulties of properly engaging with a philosophical work.

§§5–6 (pp. 3–4) How philosophy is a 'science' (Wissenschaft) and hence systematic.

§§7–16 (pp. 4–9) How the present time is right for the proper development of this science, which until now has not been possible, leading to an inadequate formalism (Schelling).

§§17–23 (pp. 9–13) A preliminary exposition of some of Hegel's central doctrines, viz. that the true or absolute is not only substance, but also subject; and that it is a developing whole. §24 (pp. 13–14) Knowledge must therefore be systematic, to grasp this whole. §25 (p. 14) One way of putting these ideas is that the Absolute is Spirit.

§§26–37 (pp. 14–22) In order to grasp these philosophical doctrines, ordinary consciousness requires a ladder to the standpoint of science; the development of this knowledge is what is outlined in this work, thereby reaching the level of conceptual thought.

§§38–47 (pp. 22–28) This development requires the overcoming of false viewpoints on the way to the truth; but this is necessary for a proper grasp of the truth, at least in philosophy, which differs in this respect from history and mathematics.

§§48–55 (pp. 28–34) The need to avoid schematizing formalism in the method of science.

§§56–59 (pp. 34–36) How the method of this science needs to be speculative, in following the movement of its subject matter. §§60–66 (pp. 36–41) How this speculative approach views the relation between subjects and predicates, substances and attributes, in a dialectical manner.

§67–70 (pp. 41–43) How philosophy differs from and relates to other ways of thinking, such as common sense. §§71–72 (pp. 44–45) Hegel's hopes for the reception of the work.

2 Why Must Science Be Systematic?

2.1 Proper Science [$haplos\ epistēmē$; *scientia propter quid*; *eigentliche Wissenschaft*]

- Often translated as 'knowledge' but not obviously 'knowledge' in contemporary English sense
  - Occasionally $epistēmē$ is translated as 'understanding'
  - Translate as 'proper science' so as to distinguish it from contemporary empirical science
  - May best be understood as epistemic *ideal*
  - Indicates sustained and systematic inquiry into some subject matter

> what is most distinctive about Aristotle's conception of $epistēmē$ is his insistence that it involve a grasp not just of a single isolated proposition, but of the whole causal and inferential network of propositions that lie behind it…what he tells us here is that it is easy to make a contribution to $epistēmē$, but very hard to achieve the complete ideal. (Pasnau 2014, 994–95)

2.2 Scholastic Aristotelian Science

> We suppose ourselves to possess unqualified scientific knowledge of a thing, as opposed to knowing it in the accidental way in which the sophist knows, when we think that we know the cause on which the fact depends, as the cause of that fact and of no other, and, further, that the fact could not be other than it is….The proper object of unqualified scientific knowledge is something which cannot be other than it is. (Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, I.2)

- Proper science is:
  - Demonstrative
    - articulable in syllogistic form
    - conclusion follows from premises necessarily
  - Apodictically certain
    - premises of syllogism are themselves certain

        - a conclusion C follows from some premises A and B, if and only if it is impossible for C to be false while A and B are both true and known to be such
    - Explanatory
        - conclusion of demonstration provides knowledge why, not merely knowledge that
        - there is an asymmetric dependence relation between premises and conclusion, such that the order of the premises displays their priority with respect to the conclusion
        - the fact indicated in conclusion is *caused* by facts indicated in the premises

2.3 Kant on Proper Science

> Every doctrine that is supposed to be a system, that is, a whole of cognition ordered according to principles, is called a science. (MFNS: 4:467)

Science: A systematically organized body of cognitions

Proper science [***eigentliche Wissenschaft***]**:** body of cognitions ordered by a principle or set of principles that –

1. organize the subject matter of the science as a whole and delineate it from other subject matter
2. ground with 'apodeictic' certainty the various cognitions that constitute the subject matter of the science
3. ground/explain the universal reach and necessary application of claims made by the science

2.4 Kant's Architectonic

> I understand by a system, however, the unity of the manifold cognitions under one idea. This is the rational concept of the form of a whole, insofar as through this the domain of the manifold as well as the position of the parts with respect to each other is determined a priori. The scientific rational concept thus contains the end and the form of the whole that is congruent with it. (A832/B860)

- Proper science is organized according to an idea of a whole, which demarcates science and provides the basis through which all of its parts are comprehended

2.5 Kant's Science of Nature – General vs. Special Metaphysics

- Science is either transcendental (critique) or natural (metaphysics of nature)
- A metaphysics of nature, which "considers everything so far as it is, on the basis of a priori concepts" (A845/B873), has two parts:
  1. General metaphysics
     - conditions of an object in general
  2. Special metaphysics
     - corporeal nature (physics)
       - ⋆ conditions of material objects
     - thinking nature (psychology)
       - ⋆ conditions of mental objects
- General (or Transcendental) metaphysics concerns nature in its 'material' sense, as the sum total of all appearances which stand in lawful connection to one another
- Special metaphysics is distinguished from General metaphysics in three ways:
  1. not entirely 'pure' — it depends on empirical concepts (i.e. <matter>, <mind>)
  2. extends only to objects of a particular form of intuition (e.g. space, time)
  3. depends on the applicability of mathematics

References

Pasnau, Robert. 2014. "Epistemology Idealized." *Mind* 122 (488): 987–1021.