

The problem of circularity between the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic*

ABSTRACT: The aim of this article is to discuss the objection of vicious circularity concerning the relation between the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic*. My argument is articulated in three stages: (i) in the first place, I will provide a historical reconstruction of the debate and I will try to neutralize the objection of vicious circularity; (ii) in the second place, I will examine the latest positions of the *Hegel-Forschung* about the issue of a possibly reciprocal presupposition between the two works; (iii) in the third place, I will analyze the meaning of a virtuous circularity, by showing its inner relation to a dynamic conception of systematicity.

KEYWORDS: CIRCULARITY, PRESUPPOSITION, GROUND, SCIENCE, SYSTEM.

RESUMEN: El objetivo de este artículo es discutir la objeción de la circularidad viciosa sobre la relación entre la *Fenomenología del Espíritu* y la *Ciencia de la Lógica*. Mi argumento se articula en tres etapas: (i) en primer lugar, proporcionaré una reconstrucción histórica del debate e intentaré neutralizar la objeción de la circularidad viciosa; (ii) en segundo lugar, examinaré las últimas posiciones de la *Hegel-Forschung* sobre la cuestión de una posible presuposición recíproca entre las dos obras; (iii) en tercer lugar, analizaré el significado de una circularidad virtuosa, mostrando su relación interna con una concepción dinámica de la sistematicidad.
PALABRAS CLAVE: CIRCULARIDAD, PRESUPOSICIÓN, FUNDAMENTO, CIENCIA, SISTEMA.

INTRODUCTION

THE RELATION BETWEEN THE *PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT* (1807) and the *Science of Logic* (1812-1816)¹ involves three major problems: (i) the question of whether the PhG plays only the function of an introduction or is also some kind of foundation of the SL; (ii) the question of whether and how Hegel transforms his own conception of the role of the PhG from the systematic project of 1807 to the encyclopedic project of 1817; (iii) the question of how the transition from absolute knowing (the end of the PhG) to pure being (the thematic beginning of the SL) occurs.

As the second problem has been thoroughly investigated by other scholars, I will limit myself to summarize the main points. By the time Hegel wrote the third book of the SL (1816) and the first edition of the *Encyclopedia* (1817), the PhG could no longer retain its *position* as the first part of the system, a position that Hegel articulates in the Preface of 1807 and maintains in the Preface to the first edition (1812) of the SL. Moreover, the PhG is no longer the *only* possible entrance to science, because the Preliminary Concept (*Vorbegriff*) of the logic and the resolve (*Entschluss*) to will to think purely (SL, GW 21: 56, 8-9; *ENC.* C §17, GW 20: 59) do, in fact, provide alternative introductions. However, the *problem* or task the PhG was charged with, namely task of leading the immediate or natural consciousness to the standpoint of philosophical knowledge, remained unaltered, as is proved by Hegel's retrospective consideration of the scientific ambition of the work of 1807 in the Remark of §25 of the *Encyclopedia* (1830) and by his willingness to publish a new edition of the PhG at the end of his life (1829-1831).²

[1] Hereafter, I will use the expression *Phenomenology* (abbreviated as PhG) to refer to Hegel's work of the Jena period, which must be carefully distinguished from the homonymous discipline of the later Philosophy of Spirit within the *Encyclopaedia* of 1827 and 1830. I will use *Logic* (abbreviated as SL) to refer to the *Science of Logic*, without making a distinction between the different versions of the work, going from the so-called *Greater Logic* of the Nürnberg period (1812-1816) to the *Lesser Logic* of the tripartite *Encyclopedia* (1817, 1827, 1830). The similarities and differences between these versions are certainly important for the study of the inner structure of the *Logic*, but not for approaching the issue of circularity between the PhG and the SL. The further issue of the historical formation of the *Science of Logic* in the Nürnberg period (1808-1816) has been studied exhaustively by: (Giuspoli 2000).

[2] The reasons why the position of the PhG in the system change in 1816-1817 are the following: (i) the new plan of the system is tripartite and revolves around the idea; (ii) the encyclopedic system contains its own scientific introduction, which is the *Vorbegriff*, that deals with the same problem of the PhG (the overcoming of the duality between subjectivity and objectivity), although from the perspective of the examination of the mains streams of the history of philosophy; (iii) the 'Phenomenology of

In what follows, I will focus on the first problem, and I will consider very briefly the third problem in the section 3.

The first problem has been motivated by the suspicion of a possible vicious circularity between the PhG and the SL.

On the one hand, some passages from the PhG and the SL (GW 9: 28, 61, 432) seem to suggest that the scientific character of Jena's work is grounded on pure speculative philosophy, which, since 1806, turns out to be a science unifying logic and metaphysics. On the other hand, the first Preface (1812) (GW 21: 8-9), the Introduction (1812, 1831) (GW 11: 20; 21: 32) and the General Division (GW 21: 44) of the *Science of Logic*, as well as the two versions of the special Introduction to the *Doctrine of Being* (GW 11: 33-34; 21: 54-55) claim that speculative philosophy relies on the *Phenomenology* as its presupposition. On account of this reciprocal presupposition, the skeptical trope of vicious circularity seems to threaten Hegel's modern philosophical project of complete critical self-grounding.

The aim of this essay is to defuse this threat by explaining Hegel's way to transform the alleged vicious circularity into a virtuous circularity. To this end, I will provide a clarification of the distinct senses in which the *Phenomenology* must be understood as a presupposition of the *Logic* and vice versa, without entailing a logical fallacy.

The methodological premises of my clarification are the following:

(i) We should not distinguish between a systematic Hegel (supposedly after the publication of the PhG) and a non-systematic Hegel, as some interpreters have viewed Hegel's intellectual development, because the *whole* of his philosophical thought, precisely as philosophical, is thoroughly committed to the foundation of the idea of the system, as is confirmed by Hegel's famous letter to Schelling in November of 1800, a letter which announces Hegel's conversion to the philosophical career.

Spirit' is reduced to a discipline that occupies the middle section of the Philosophy of Subjective Spirit (Kervégan 2014, pp. 257-258). While the §36 of the first edition of the *Encyclopædia* (1817) tries to strike the balance between the original status and the new limited position of the first three moments of the PhG (consciousness, self-consciousness, reason) within the circle of philosophy (GW 13: 34-35), in §25 of the last edition of the *Encyclopædia* (1830) (GW 20: 68-69) Hegel proves to be well aware of the reason why the PhG of 1807 differs from the homonymous discipline *within* the system. On the problem of the PhG as the first part of the system and as a "preliminary to science" (*Voraus der Wissenschaft*) (GW 9: 448), see: (Fulda 1975², pp. 79-115). On the "intrinsic difficulties of a phenomenological exposition of the whole system as an introduction to science", see: (Ferrer 2009, pp. 75-77, 83).

(ii) The PhG is not external to the system, but rather the becoming of the system in an element or *medium* that is not immediately conceptual, but, nevertheless, is not simply alien to the concept, once consciousness turns out to be the *appearance* of spirit, and the concept (the activity of self-production) is the *essence* of spirit (GW 9: 432).

(iii) Although Hegel revised the place of the PhG within the system after 1807, there is a vital and systematic relation between the first and the second of Hegel's works.

In order to explain the relation at issue, I will adopt a theoretical approach, that will include the discussion of some options available in the latest research. By so doing, I will abstract from the questions concerning the historical genesis of the PhG and the SL, as well as from two groups of distinctive issues, namely the issue of the transformation of Hegel's idea of logic in the Jena period (1801-1807), with the related discussion about which logic draft would best underlie the structure of the PhG³, and the related issue of how and why Hegel came to conceive of the project of a peculiar science, that replaces the earlier logic drafts as an introduction to the standpoint of speculation, namely the exposition of the identity of the forms of pure thought and the forms of being.⁴

Nevertheless, the fact that Hegel elaborated the SL only after the PhG does have a philosophical significance, insofar as Hegel was aware that the standpoint of a speculative logic could not be validated through a sheer opposition to the standpoint of ordinary consciousness, but rather requires a critical examination of this latter.

My approach defends the compatibility between two seemingly opposite claims: (a) The SL presupposes the PhG; (b) both the SL and the PhG are presuppositionless or undogmatic, because neither borrows the method of the other, so that the presuppositionlessness of each is qualified by its own distinctive medium or element: namely the experience of consciousness (PhG) and the accomplishment of pure thinking thinking itself as its object (SL).⁵

[3] A fair discussion of this problem is provided by: (Chiereghin 1994, pp. 22-29). Chiereghin argues in favor of a *specific* conceptual organization of the PhG and warns against the search of any rigid correspondence between the PhG and any previous or later project of the logic.

[4] On these issues, a good overview is provided by (Bowman, 2018, 6-18). The role of the PhG in resolving the aporia of the relation between logic and metaphysics in the Jena system drafts is stressed by Chiereghin: "Once the *Phenomenology* accomplishes successfully the task of introducing to absolute knowing, there is no more need for a logic of finite thought in order to introduce to a metaphysics of absolute thought" (Chiereghin, 1996, 32, translation is mine).

[5] The presuppositionlessness of the PhG has been argued by: (Trisokkas 2012, pp. 71-92); (Houlgate 2013, pp. 9-10). According to Trisokkas, the PhG is presupposition-

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1. DEFUSING THE *PETITIO PRINCIPII*

The objection of *petitio principii* was firstly expressed in a letter to Hegel by his friend Isaak von Sinclair, who had studied both the PhG and the first book of Hegel's SL: "I had believed your *Phenomenology* was taken as, so to speak, a historical introduction to metaphysics (even though it had appeared to me something infinite, arbitrary, and thus unsuited to the purpose), but I now see that in your *Logic* you afterwards appeal to it as something self-standing and foundational (*ein Selbständiges und Begründendes*), and this seems to me a [vicious] circle (*Zirkel*)."⁶ Since then, the relation between the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic* has been subject to scrutiny from different perspectives. The critics of Hegel insisted on the problem of an unavoidable circle⁷ or stressed an alleged incoherence in Hegel's idea of a phenomenological critique of knowledge, that "had to assume as uncertain the standpoint of absolute knowledge [...]. Yet in fact it presupposed absolute knowledge with such certainty that it believed

less because the proof of absolute knowing is "the undogmatic element of experience", which is "totally internal to the form of consciousness under examination" (Trisokkas 2012, p. 88). According to Houlgate, "Hegel does not *presuppose* that the experience of consciousness is guided by certain categories", insofar as the categories "are shown by phenomenology to be immanent in the experience of consciousness" (Houlgate 2013, p. 10). For an opposite view, see: (Brinkmann 2010, pp. 79-219). Brinkmann argued that the PhG is a 'transcendental argument' that presupposes the standpoint of speculation, which should be the end result of the phenomenology.

[6] Letter of October 12, 1812 (*Briefe* I, p. 417, *Letters*, p. 291, translation modified by me). Unfortunately, Hegel's reply to this letter has been lost. We must note that Sinclair's own reading of the *Phenomenology* as a *historical* introduction to *speculative* construction is not an adequate view of the relation the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic*, because he misses the systematic function of the PhG.

[7] In the nineteenth century, the objection against the vicious circle resurfaced with Rudolf Haym, who saw in Hegel's philosophy a double circle: (i) the "circular proof (*Zirkelbeweis*)" (Haym 1857, p. 256 translation is mine) of truth in which the *Phenomenology* is involved; (ii) the circle between the *Phenomenology* and the "later realization of the system", which "in its articulated totality is only an *explication and completion of what is contained in the Phenomenology*" (Haym 1857, p. 255 translation is mine).

itself exempted from the business of the critique of knowledge from its first step”.⁸ From a more sympathetic perspective, Hyppolite defended the thesis of a correspondence between the PhG and the SL: “the discourse of experience and the discourse of being, the *a posteriori* and the *a priori*, correspond to one another and mutually require one another”⁹. The notion of ‘correspondence’ is non-reductionistic, insofar as it entails not only the reciprocal presupposition between the PhG and the SL, but also the difference in regard to the element in which their respective ‘movement’ or self-explication takes place: the PhG in the element of consciousness; the SL in the element of purely conceptual thinking.

The problem rose to a new level of discussion in the 1960s and 1970s, when the institution of the *Hegel-Archiv* allowed to begin a deeper investigation on the formation of Hegel’s texts, while also stimulating in Germany the formation of an international research community of Hegel scholars. Among the fundamental contributions of these decades to the issue of the logic of the PhG, Pöggeler’s conclusion seems plausible: “We have good reasons to hold fast to the *Phenomenology* itself in regard to the question of the logic in the phenomenology, and to reject all the attempts to establish a *parallelism* between the phenomenology and any elaboration of the logic”¹⁰. In other words, the PhG

[8] (Habermas 1973, pp. 32-33 translation is mine). Habermas believes that Hegel did not develop consistently his own idea of a “radicalization of the critique of knowledge” on account of his preoccupation with “the presuppositions of the philosophy of identity (*identitätsphilosophische Voraussetzungen*)” (ivi, p. 14, translation is mine). Habermas does not explain what he means precisely by ‘philosophy of identity’, but we can assume that he refers either to the identity of thought and being displayed in the speculative logic or to an alleged endorsement of Schelling’s *Identitätsphilosophie*. In either case, Habermas is not interested in reconstructing how does Hegel aims to *prove* the ‘identity’ at issue, and he claims that Hegel is stuck in a vicious circle. The objection against Hegel’s alleged vicious circle was raised again in the 1970s by: (Rosen 1974, p. 127, p. 129); (Düsing 1976, p. 92).

[9] (Hyppolite 1997, p. 36).

[10] (Pöggeler 1973, p. 271, emphasis and translation are mine). According to Pöggeler, there is indeed a correspondence between the phenomenological articulation provided by the triadic summary (A. B. C.) that Hegel attached to the PhG after he wrote it and the articulation of a fragment of speculative logic that Hegel placed at the end of the *Philosophy of Spirit* of 1806. For an interesting discussion of Fulda’s and Pöggeler’s positions on the issue of the logic of the PhG, I refer to: (Trede 1975). These positions were criticized by Puntel from a theoretical standpoint motivated by the defense of an equiprimordial unity (an elementary structure) of *Phenomenology*, *Logic*, and *Noology* (*Psychology*) (Puntel 1973, pp. 145-265). Puntel argued that the co-extensionality of the PhG and the SL does not mean a mere congruence between two sequences (the sequence of logical moments and phenomenological shapes), but the repetition or the expansion of the logical dimension of the elementary structure in the concrete figures of spirit (Puntel 1973, p. 279). In my view, Puntel’s interpretation meets three basic problems:

is self-sufficient, in the sense that it neither applies any draft of logic from the Jena period nor relies on the later SL, which develops a conception of logic that is considerably different from the Jena system-drafts. However, I believe that the self-sufficiency of the PhG in regard to its method cannot imply an absolute independence from logicity as such, partly because the internal purpose of the PhG is the production of the concept of science as speculation, partly because, as Hegel suggests (GW 9: 432, 19-25), the shapes of consciousness must correspond to the thought-determinations or pure concepts of science.

The reason why the relation of the PhG to the SL is not a sheer fallacy is quickly said: the skeptical trope of *petitio principii* applies to terms that are supposed to stand in a grounding-relation, one being the ground of the other and the other way around. However, neither of the two sciences grounds the other. Strictly speaking, the PhG grounds the *access* to the standpoint of the SL to whom is firmly convinced to ground knowledge on the opposite standpoint (namely, the opposition between subject and object, thinking and being). In order to shake this conviction, the PhG uses the trope of the ladder and undertakes an exercise of self-consummating skepticism, which ends with the immunization of the standpoint of science against the pyrrhonian trope of equipollence, that claims the equal validity between the standpoint of finite knowledge and the one of absolute knowledge.

The key for the dissolution of vicious circularity is the distinction between the concept of 'presupposition' (*Voraussetzung*) and that of 'ground' (*Grund*). The PhG does not produce a transition to the standpoint of the SL as a ground produces the grounded, but rather in the sense of refuting and demolishing the grounds or reasons that bar the entrance to science¹¹. These hindrances are constituted by a series of standpoints that take themselves as alternatives to the standpoint of 'scientific' cognition or absolute knowing. What all these standpoints have in common is the conviction that there is a fundamental opposition between the structures of knowledge and the structures of being. Basically, the task of the PhG is to show that the only scientific standpoint is the standpoint of thought (the identity of knowing and being), not that of consciousness, determined by the non-identity of knowing and being. This task cannot be accomplished through a sheer assurance that one standpoint is

(i) he cannot explain the privileged position of the phenomenology and the noology in the philosophy of spirit; (ii) he cannot justify the assumption that the structure of the *Logic* should be understood in terms of the structure of subjective spirit (Puntel 1973, p. 132); (iii) the talk of an elementary structure risks to undermine the richness of the distinctions of the system (included its openness to the world of experience) and to extinguish the importance of the transitions and the processual constitution of the system.

[11] (Forster 1998, pp. 283-286).

right, while the other is wrong, but rather in the form of an immanent study of the certainties of consciousness, in which the philosopher avoids taking for granted the identity of knowing and being. What the SL presupposes is the process of self-actualizing skepticism (experience), through which natural consciousness is led from its own certainties to the concept of science. This process is, therefore, a negation of the basic presupposition (the opposition of consciousness) that claims to stand against speculation or presuppositionless thinking (conceptual thinking's self-explication).¹²

If we were to adopt Hösle's distinction between genetic presuppositions and presuppositions of validity – understood as a distinction between the conditions for the knowledge of truth on part of finite rational subjects and the presuppositions for the truth of knowledge¹³ – we could say that the PhG is a peculiar genetic presupposition of the SL, but not a founding one.¹⁴ However, we must remember that Hegel's usage of the term 'genesis' is ambivalent (or better, systematically contextual), oscillating between a natural or historical sense of genesis and a logical sense of genesis as concept's self-explication. Besides, his idealism does argue that *all* presuppositions (regardless of their kind) must eventually be sublated *as such* on the level of science, as a self-constructing process through which the mismatch between knowing and truth is finally overcome. Therefore, the PhG is a very peculiar genetic presupposition of the SL: it is an investigation of the *coming-to-be* of the standpoint of science (GW 9: 24) by way of a demonstration of how the 'genetic presuppositions' of absolute knowing must be brought to the fore or explicated or *posited* as the moments of its own constitution. Since Hegel admits that the phenomenological investigation is *itself* a science, this opens the paradox of a science *before* the science, thus the issue of circularity.

[12] On this regard, Maker argues that “the *Phenomenology* is the presupposition for presuppositionless science because it indicates what science must begin with if it is to begin without any presuppositions concerning knowing” (Maker 1994, p. 77).

[13] (Hösle 1991, pp. 27-28, 81-82).

[14] Hösle argues explicitly this claim in: (Hösle 1988, p. 58, note 88). A similar distinction is used by scholars like Winfield, Maker and Houlgate to defend the presuppositionlessness of speculative logic. Houlgate distinguishes between “historical presuppositions” (notably, the historical significance of the Protestant Reformation and the French Revolution for the modern historical demand for free, self-grounding thought), “hermeneutic presuppositions” (the readiness to let go or suspend all inherited presuppositions about the nature of thought and being) and “founding presuppositions” (substantive presuppositions about the nature of the logical content and the path of investigation). See: (Houlgate 2006, pp. 60-71).

2. RECENT FORMULATIONS OF THE ISSUE OF CIRCULARITY

Recently, the problem of circularity between the PhG and the SL has been reanimated from both a historical and a theoretical point of view.

Horstmann argued that the PhG does not presuppose the SL, whereas the SL presupposes the PhG, which must prove the element of pure knowing – ‘pure’ in the sense of having been purified from the opposition of consciousness –, the element on which the “metaphysical credo”¹⁵ of Hegel’s system is grounded. The only way to dissolve the impression of a vicious circle consists, according to Horstmann, in avoiding the confusion between the standpoint (*Standpunkt*) of science and the one of the logic in a strict or narrow sense (that is, logic as the *first* science, but only the first one, of the whole system of sciences)¹⁶, and in claiming that the PhG introduces directly to the standpoint of science, but only indirectly to the standpoint of the SL. The role of an introduction must be understood in terms of *making-possible* the concept of science, not as a contentful presupposition of science, but rather as a pragmatic presupposition.

What puzzles me in Horstmann’s reconstruction is his description of the element of the SL in terms of a “metaphysical credo”. If the PhG succeeds in producing the concept of science, then this latter can be neither an article of faith nor a hidden premise of the SL. Moreover, Horstmann seems to ignore the passage from the Introduction of the SL – both in the 1812 (GW 11: 20) and the 1831 edition (GW 21: 32) – where Hegel claims that the concept of science is not only a result of the PhG, but must also emerge *within* the logic itself.¹⁷ This means that the identity of the forms of pure thought with the forms of being is not a mere assumption *behind* the project of the SL, but rather a presupposition that comes to be *posited* once the SL clarifies the logical nature of pure thinking and articulates the ‘moments’ or thought-determinations necessary for pure thinking to be pure thinking.¹⁸

[15] (Horstmann 2014, p. 54).

[16] For Horstmann, the standpoint of science is not a discipline, but “the medium of explication of a state of affairs” that allows the “exposition of the true in the mode of the systematic development of its concept” (Horstmann 2014, p. 49). The standpoint of the SL is its status as *first discipline* of the system of science (Horstmann 2014, p. 54). Although I agree that the standpoint of science is not limited to the *Science of Logic*, because it also includes the philosophy of reality, I don’t see how the basic insight of the SL, namely the insight into the conceptual constitution of actuality (Horstmann 2014, 54, note 15), can be different from the insight into what science is, an insight that, according to Horstmann, is the intended result of the PhG.

[17] Hegel’s phrase in parentheses is the following: “(apart from the fact that it [the concept of science] emerges within logic itself).” (GW 21: 32).

[18] On this respect, I agree with Pippin that “one must defend the strong claim of internal necessity Hegel makes about the development of such concepts [scil. the

Bowman raises further criticisms against Horstmann's position, by providing both textual and theoretical evidence for questioning the distinction between the standpoint of science and the standpoint of the SL. After an examination of the possible positions on the relation between the PhG and the SL, Bowman endorses Fulda's interpretation, according to which *the PhG presupposes the SL*, while the converse thesis holds only under some qualifications, because Jena's work undergoes a reinterpretation (*Umdeutung*) since the end of the publication of the SL (1816), and more explicitly with the encyclopedic conception of the system, firstly appeared in 1817. Hegel's idea of encyclopaedia is the discourse of actuality as a circular whole (the circle of circles as the overarching interconnection of all the spheres of determinations of thought and reality). According to Fulda, on account of the significant expansion of the section that introduces the logic, namely the Preliminary Concept (*Vorbegriff*), in the second (1827) and third (1830) version of the *Encyclopedia*, the PhG has no longer the function of providing the essential justification of the beginning of science in its proper element (conceptual thinking). Instead, its justificatory role is restricted to the beginning *for* the finite subject, whose decision to do philosophy is motivated by the critical reconstruction of the stages of relative knowing.¹⁹

According to Bowman, the circularity between the PhG and the SL can be neutralized once we acknowledge that the presupposition the PhG is meant to make explicit, that is, the possibility of making claims to the knowledge of truth on the part of consciousness, does not belong to the logical science, because this latter aims to prove "the identity of the idea with being, not the identity between the idea and the decision of the will to think purely"²⁰. However, the SL provides the "ultimate ground of the togetherness (*Zusammengehörigkeit*)

determinate concepts of the Logic]" (Pippin, 2019, pp. 37-38) and this defense amounts to "the Hegelian "deduction" " (Pippin, 2018, p. 48). Neither the PhG, which replaces Kant's Transcendental Deduction (Pippin, 2018, p. 265), nor the SL, which replaces Kant's Metaphysical Deduction, without admitting any separation between general and transcendental logic (Pippin, 2018, p. 65), entail a "metaphysical credo", as Horstmann has it, and Hegel is by no means entitled to "wave the magic wand of "to be is to be intelligible" " over Kant's categories (Pippin, 2018, p. 37).

[19] (Fulda 1975², pp. 266-273). The question here arises concerning the status of the individual who philosophizes: what is it to be an individual (*Individuum*) for Hegel? In the PhG, the individual involved in the coming-to-be of science is not an empirical individual – although this must *appear* to be the case at the first stages of consciousness – but rather the "universal individual, the spirit of the world" (GW 9: 24). This conception of individual rules out the hypothesis of considering the PhG as a merely psychological introduction to science.

[20] (Bowman 2018, p. 36 translation is mine).

of certainty and truth” for *all* truth-claims. Accordingly, Bowman claims that *the PhG presupposes the SL*, because the sense of the phenomenological enterprise “can be disclosed only from the perspective of the resolve to will to think purely. Without having already taken the standpoint of science, it is not even possible to find out the problem to which the PhG ought to answer”²¹. Against this view, that seems to project retrospectively the issue of the resolve upon the role of the PhG, Houlgate is right to argue that “Hegel *aims* to show that the certainties of consciousness lead to the standpoint of philosophy, but he may not assume in advance that logic will ensure this happens”.²² As we will see in the next section, the PhG does not presuppose the SL, but rather the logical element, that is the connection of categories that are exposed in the *Logic* according to its specific method.

3. IN DEFENSE OF A VIRTUOUS CIRCULARITY

Horstmann’s and Bowman’s arguments both dispel, in different ways, the vicious circularity between the PhG and the SL. However, as far as I understand them, they don’t take into account the possibility, and even the necessity, of articulating a different conception of circularity. In my view, we should search a *virtuous* kind of circularity²³ between the PhG and the SL, and a virtuous circularity means a dynamic or self-constituting circularity which expresses the togetherness of certainty (immediate self-knowing) and truth (identity of

[21] (Bowman, 2018, p. 37 translation is mine).

[22] (Houlgate, 2013, p. 10).

[23] On the topic of circularity in Hegel’s philosophy, see: (Souche-Dagues 1986); (Rockmore 1986). Souche-Dagues investigates the topic of the circle as the mark of the systematicity of each of the ‘blocs’ in which she classifies Hegel’s works: the drafts of the Jena period, the *Phenomenology*, and the *Encyclopedia*, which includes the different versions of the *Logic* written after the *Phenomenology*. Like Labarrière and Kervégan, Souche-Dagues reads the PhG as the equivalent of the system in the element of consciousness (Souche-Dagues 1986, pp. 16-17.). The author defends a specific claim about the PhG and the SL: “insofar the object of the PhG is consciousness, the PhG plays the role of the hinge (*charnière*) that articulates a Logic in which reflection is still external to the subject matter with the speculative Logic, whose center, the doctrine of essence, is precisely a theory of reflection” (Souche-Dagues 1986, p. 62 translation is mine). However, in my view, the PhG is scientific or ‘logic’ precisely because it is not guided by any external reflection, as the metaphor of the hinge suggests, but rather is the *immanent* criticism of natural consciousness. Rockmore develops the notion of a circular epistemology selectively through the corpus of Hegel’s writings, but he does not consider how this principle may help to understand the structure of both the PhG and the SL, and his conclusion that Hegel is still caught in the subjective circle which has entrapped his predecessors is disputable.

knowing and being or the warranted knowability of anything at all) as a process of self-constitution actualized in the object and in the subject of knowing, without any subjective imposition or external presupposition.

In this last part, I will try to explain the notion of virtuous circularity through a series of steps, which are connected by the following guideline: if circularity is the form of achievement of systematicity, and systematicity is the only guarantee of science, and if the logical and the phenomenological science are both necessary for the self-grounding of the system, then the relation between the two must be systematic and thus inherently circular. At the same time, if the circle is not a just an image or a static shape, but rather an internally *teleological* movement, then it cannot amount to a coming and going from one term to another; instead, it must involve a *transition* towards the science of pure form, because pure knowing and appearing knowing are not symmetrical or equipollent. Let me now examine some aspects of this relation.

(i) The problem of the PhG is neither a psychological (GW 9: 446) nor a merely historical problem, but rather a *philosophical* one, namely, how to legitimate the necessity of the standpoint of science.

(ii) Although Hegel passes from a bipartite to a tripartite conception of the system and revises the position of the PhG with respect to the system after 1807, he never denies the permanent *value* of the problem of the PhG and its ability to overcome insufficient or limited conceptions of knowing and truth. For this reason, both the first Preface of the SL and the Introduction to the second edition of the *Doctrine of Being* (1831) confirm the role of the PhG as a deduction of the concept of science.

(iii) PhG and SL are unified by an “internal community between speculative and appearing knowing”²⁴. This common bond is the structure of knowing, which implies the idea of the subjectivity of the process of truth, according to the well-known programmatic claim of the Preface to the PhG. The ‘structure’ at issue is not fixed, but dialectical, which means self-correcting and self-transforming. As a result of its experience, the structure of consciousness turns out to be the appearance of the structure of spirit, so that the finite subjectivity finally discovers that its ‘path of despair’ is driven by an impulse, namely the satisfying comprehension of its relation to the actual world. Thus, this path can be recollected as a way towards infinite subjectivity or absolute knowing. Kervégan rightly stresses that concept, subject, circle, and system are unified by the conception of spirit as a dynamic of self-knowledge. The system of science is the explication by the spirit of its own concept (namely, the processual and

[24] (Bowman 2018, p. 37, translation is mine).

self-encompassing identity of thinking and being).²⁵ Both the PhG and the SL are ‘systematic’ in this sense, but precisely their medium of explication (respectively, consciousness and pure thinking) is what makes of them two distinct configurations of the very idea of the system. Circularity is crucial to understand that the system is not a unilinear derivation from some grounding presupposition, but the holistic dynamic of self-production of truth. This process cannot be accomplished at some point or *exhausted* by some determinate science. On account of this conception of truth, the circularity dissolves the claim that the system of science is a two-layered structure with either the PhG or the SL as its grounding science (either at the bottom or at the top level).

The end of the PhG is simultaneously a return to its beginning (to the *conceptual* determination of the object of sensible certainty) and the opening of a *new* beginning, namely the beginning of pure knowing as the medium of the knowability of being as such. The beginning of the SL with the *thought* of pure being does not imply that pure being coincides with absolute knowing in the PhG. ‘Pure being’ is rather an abstraction (a methodical unknowing, a peculiar repetition of Socrates’ gesture) through which *pure* knowing willingly suspends its own mediation (the distinction of form and content, as well as the sequence of conceptions that consciousness forms of being and thought) in order to *make* the presuppositionless beginning of its own cycle of determination. On this point, I disagree with Klaus Düsing, who argues that the end of the PhG is simultaneously the beginning of the SL, because the phenomenological foundation of absolute subjectivity (spirit as absolute knowing) is the basis for the categories of Objective Logic. In my view, Düsing is right to say that the category of being is “a constitutive part of the self-relation of spirit”²⁶ in light of the PhG and also on account of a retrospective view of the SL as the self-movement of the concept, but he does not appreciate enough the issue of the presuppositionless beginning and the role of abstraction in the method of the SL.²⁷ So pure being is not an immediate or direct result of absolute knowing,

[25] (Kervégan 2008, pp. 49-50). On the inseparability between the movement of the *Logic* and the role of subjectivity as spirit, see: (Pippin 2018, p. 135). The co-constituting relation between spirit and logical movement is made clear by Hegel himself in the Preface to the PhG (GW 9: 30), in the first Preface (1812) to the SL (GW 21: 8), and in the Introduction to the *Doctrine of Being* (GW 21: 54).

[26] (Düsing 1976, p. 207 translation is mine).

[27] From a systematic point of view, Düsing acknowledges a shift in the relation of the PhG to the SL: the former ceases to be seen by Hegel as “an introduction equipped with a foundational function” (Düsing 1976, p. 208 translation is mine) insofar as the latter founds and justifies itself as a self-sufficient theory of absolute subjectivity. Düsing’s interpretation of the principle and subject matter of the SL as “absolute subjectivity” is open to dispute, but this must be left for another occasion.

but only a mediated result, mediated by pure *knowing* (*rein Wissen*) as the form of knowing that, thanks to the PhG, is from now on free from the opposition of consciousness and its willing to expose its own moments ‘from scratch’ or in a new way, namely in the logical or purely speculative way.

Bowman reads the beginning of the *Logic* as an argument that demonstrates the possibility of an original synthetic unity of thinking by showing the failure of thinking an originally non-synthetic unity, namely pure being. However, in my view, the total abstraction of pure being is not the mark of some ‘failure’ (failure of synthesis, failure of intentionality, or whatever), but rather the only possible presuppositionless beginning.²⁸ On the transition from the PhG to the SL, I agree with Houlgate’s remark: “The *Phenomenology* thus does not end directly where the *Logic* begins – with the pure thought of being as such. It ends with a determinate conception of being as universal reason (*Begriff*) that marks the disappearance of the opposition between consciousness and its object”²⁹. The logical structure of subjectivity (the concept) is, therefore, both a result of the PhG and a principle that must develop and knows itself from within in the SL.³⁰

(iv) Within the tripartite conception of the system, the PhG seems to be superfluous or *out* of the system, not a place *of* the system. However, as I argued in (ii), the PhG retains its value, because it exposes the becoming of the system through the self-undermining conditions of the finitude of consciousness, self-consciousness, reason, and spirit. This journey through the limitations of the (abstract and historical) shapes that are apparently alien to the standpoint of science *justifies* for natural consciousness the movement towards this standpoint.

As distinct sciences, the PhG and the SL have not only something in common – namely the dynamic of spirit and thereby the purpose of establishing a new concept of science –, but also important differences concerning their content and method. Once Hegel changed his plan from the idea of making of

[28] On the reason why pure being is the first thought of pure knowing, Bowman argues what follows: «[Being] is a thought whose directedness toward something other than itself (a content) has, so to speak, been captured and held back; its referential import is transparently void. Precisely for this reason, it is predestined to be the first thought of the ‘pure knowing’ with which the *Logic* begins and in which “all reference to an other and to mediation has been sublated,” such that “only simple immediacy is present” (GW: 21, 55). Pure knowing, as Hegel conceives it, *is* the thought of *being*». (Bowman 2017, p. 227).

[29] (Houlgate 2006, p. 162). According to Houlgate, the transition is ensured by the task of immanent skepticism, that is generated by the PhG with respect to consciousness and is carried out by the SL with respect to pure thinking.

[30] (Düsing 1976, p. 208).

the PhG the first part of the system to the idea of a tripartite system built around the three main forms of the idea (*Idee*), the SL came to be the *first* science of the system as the exposition of the idea in the element of pure thinking, and this element is clearly distinct from natural or impure consciousness, which was (at least initially) the element of the PhG. However, both elements are modes of being of spirit, and spirit is a double *movement* of exteriorization (*appearing* knowledge as the necessary way in which absolute knowing is initially or minimally aware of itself, and pure being as the *appearing* beginning of logic, the necessary way in which the idea is firstly known by pure thinking) and interiorization (the action through which absolute knowing looks back at its path and knows itself as what was implicitly involved in the sensible certainty as the most immediate figure of knowing, or the action through which the absolute idea ‘recollects’ the beginning of science and knows itself as the inner goal of pure being, which turns out to be the most immediate identity of pure thinking and being). In other words, spirit forms both a descending (from idea to being) and an ascending dialectic (from being to idea).

The circular relation between the descending and the ascending movement is not undermined by the presentation of the SL as a first science, because we must remember that this is only half of the truth. The circular structure of spirit requires that the validation (*Bewährung*) of the logic as the “*last science*” (GW 12: 198) of the system, whereby the logical element comprehends itself as absolute spirit. The issue of the position and *value* of the logic is connected both with the *Bildung* of the individual – as is pointed out by the Introduction of the SL through the comparison of the logic with grammar (GW 21: 41-42) – and with the syllogistic dynamic of the system of sciences (logic – philosophy of nature – philosophy of spirit), that is made explicit by the three syllogisms at the end of the *Encyclopedia* (1817, 1830).³¹

(v) Among the totality of the circles of the system, the PhG and the SL are not only independent circles or spheres of determination, each in respect of its own element, but they also form *one* circle of *reciprocal* presupposition. However, they do not fall prey to a circle of foundation, because they presuppose each other according to *distinct* senses of ‘presupposition’ (and not according to a grounding-relation) and according to reason’s purposive activity, which strives towards a theory of satisfying self-comprehension (a system of philosophical sciences).

(v.a.) The SL presupposes the PhG in the sense that “the decision to philosophize in its absolute radicality is possible only when the [forms of] one-sidedness

[31] For a discussion of this point, I refer to: (Orsini, 2018).

that prevent subjective consciousness from willing to think are overcome³². In other words, the SL presupposes the *result* of the PhG, namely the “*concept of science*” (GW 11. 20-21), but neither the specific element of this science nor its specific method, which is the phenomenological experience of the limitation of some standard of knowledge from the first-person perspective, and includes the complication of a discrepancy between what is *for consciousness* and what holds *for us*, speculative philosophers. At the same time, as Hegel stresses, the concept of science must be established *also* within the *Logic*, where the subject of knowledge is no longer defined by a path from consciousness to spirit, but rather by spirit knowing the conceptual nature of the logic of cognition as such.

How can the concept of science be, at the same time, the result of two different sciences, one of which is the presupposition of the other? The answer lies in the dialectical transformation of what is meant by “the concept of science”. In the Introduction of the SL, this expression means that the last figure of the PhG (absolute knowing) has shown what science (the knowledge of the truth) is like: not the mirroring of a realm of independent objects, but the conceptual self-knowledge of spirit as the processual unity of subjective certainty and objective truth. At the end of the SL, the concept of science is the absolute idea that knows itself as “*the self-knowing truth*” (GW 12. 236) of all there is.³³ In the PhG, the concept of science is a possibility that becomes actual through the refutation of natural consciousness. In the SL, the concept of science is the self-explication or self-actualization of purely conceptual thinking. Yet the *concept* of science is not the *idea* of science or philosophy, which requires the knowledge of the idea in all its shapes of realization, not just the *purely* logical shape. The idea of philosophy is not the same as the absolute idea, although it is not something really different from it. In the encyclopedic conception of the

[32] (Kervégan 2008, p. 75 translation is mine). Kervégan understands the PhG as the scientific *condition* (the scientific history of consciousness) for the resolve to will to think purely, because he wants to divest this resolve (*Entschluß*) of its seemingly miraculous character. However, according to Hegel, the resolve that possibly replaces the phenomenological journey is not mysterious, because it is not some actual erasing of any (psychological, historical, hermeneutic) presupposition of the SL. Rather, it is performed by actual thinking subjects, who bracket their given particular standpoints in order to enact a radically self-critical standpoint. The resolve is not an irrational decision, because it is “accomplished through the freedom that [...] grasps its own pure abstraction, the simplicity of thinking” (ENC. 1830, §78 Remark, GW 20. 118).

[33] See the following passage from the SL: “The method is the pure concept that only relates to itself; [...] it now is also the *fulfilled being*, the *concept that comprehends itself*, being as the *concrete* and just as absolutely *intensive totality*” (GW 12. 252). The same claim is present in the SL of the *Encyclopedia* (1830): “The science concludes in this way by grasping the concept of itself as the pure idea, for which the idea is” (§243, GW 20. 231).

system, the idea of philosophy is accomplished by absolute spirit only through the reciprocal mediation of the three circles of the system (Logic, Philosophy of Nature, Philosophy of Spirit), and this mediation must be explored in the form of three syllogistic connections.

It would be possible to characterize this connection both in terms of the three syllogisms of philosophy and in terms of the three stages of Hegel's logic of reflection: a self-determining or self-positing idea, that is "positing reflection" (the purely logical idea); an "external reflection" that provides the presupposition of this positing, and introduces a split between the purely ideal and its impure shape or embodiment (the real) (nature as the external idea); a "determining reflection", that expresses the unity of these moments on the ground of an embodied intelligibility (spirit as the idea returning to itself from nature). Within the theoretical framework of the *Encyclopedia*, the virtuous circularity is not limited to the dual relation between the PhG and the SL. Instead, it is the discursive articulation of a self-organizing totality, which must dissipate the impression of a linear chain of paragraphs, suggested by a first (one-sided) reading of the book.

(v. b) The PhG presupposes the *element* of the SL, namely the conceptual nature of the object of knowledge (GW 9: 28), although this element *cannot* be fully transparent, because the proper method of the PhG is characterized by the intertwining of two levels of analysis, marked by the expressions "for consciousness" and "for us" (or "in-itself"). This second level makes explicit the necessity that guides the scientific reconstruction of the transitions from one shape of consciousness to another and describes the logic that is displayed, so to speak, behind the back of consciousness itself (GW 9: 61). Accordingly, there is a peculiar correspondence (GW 9: 432) – not a sheer coincidence – between some logical determination of the object of consciousness (for example, being, property, essence, force, etc.) and some determinate claim of knowledge or consciousness' holding-for-true. However, the presuppositionlessness or scientificity of the PhG is not undermined, because its *method* is not borrowed from any ready-made logic – as Pöggeler showed, none was carried out as an accomplished 'model' to apply at the time Hegel wrote the PhG – but rather is made necessary by the experience of consciousness. The correspondence between phenomenological shapes and logical forms is not imposed by the philosopher, who wishes to drive experience towards a predetermined goal (namely the identity of thought and being), but is immanent to the peculiar journey (self-formative process) of consciousness.³⁴ Therefore, the PhG presup-

[34] This point has been brought out aptly by Chiereghin: "Even if each step of the path of the *Phenomenology* is permeated by logicity, the logical determinations

poses *logicality* (the set of categories that are *found* to be at work in the various shapes of consciousness), but not the SL qua *science*, with its own method of exposition of categories. The SL posits or thematizes *as such* the logicality the PhG employs and considers only in relation to the various categorial forms it assumes for consciousness.

The PhG is motivated by the willing to show that natural consciousness *can* be led by its experience to philosophy. However, this motivation, which is reason's need for self-knowledge, should not to be confused with a predetermination or previous foundation of the peculiar method of the PhG, for this would be the source of a vicious circle. The end of the PhG is not given for free, but must be achieved through the long and self-correcting way of despair, without taking for granted the standpoint of absolute knowing. So, in virtue of its sceptical method, the PhG must also be scientific and presuppositionless, although in a way that is different from the presuppositionlessness of the *Logic*.

CONCLUSION

I tried to show that the circularity between the PhG and the SL is virtuous in so far as it is ruled by the unfolding of spirit's self-knowledge in different *media* of knowledge. In the PhG, the medium is made by the structure of consciousness, which assumes a clear distinction between knowing-conditions and truth-conditions. In the SL, this distinction is either immediately suspended (through the resolve to will to think purely) or progressively overcome through the dissolution of the structure of natural consciousness. The SL presupposes the PhG in respect to the finite subject, who must be educated to question the absolute right of the opposition between knowing and being. Once this education is completed, the real subject of experience (spirit) learns that the categories that worked behind the back of consciousness are the conceptual nature of spirit, and the last shape of spirit is science or absolute knowing. This is the "concept of science", which is the presupposition of the SL. The task of the SL is to posit this presupposition. The act of positing – in fact, not a singular act of some creative philosopher, but the sustained effort of a collectively achieved modern project of self-understanding – does not leave the presupposition as it is, but dissolves precisely the presupposition as a form (the form of what is posited beforehand or beyond the logic). The identity of thinking and being is not a given, but a process that spirit must now unfold in the element of a pure

have to be maintained in the fluidity that characterizes not only a maturation that is not yet completed, but also the very complexity of the journey made by consciousness" (Chiereghin 1994, p. 29 translation is mine).

form, pure knowing or knowability as such: a self-determining reflexive activity without external or internal undeveloped presuppositions.³⁵

Once we understand the reason of the transition from the PhG to the SL, the identity of thought and being cannot be a special presupposition we endorse as a ‘premise’ or a matter of faith. Moreover, the SL turns out to be the first part of the journey through which (absolute) spirit comprehends that it is the “concrete and ultimate supreme truth of all being” (GW 21: 57). This journey is no longer phenomenological, but the patient and careful execution of the system of sciences. Within the encyclopedic form of the system, structured around the idea (*Idee*), the SL experiences a new circularity – its position as the first and the last science of the system –, while the PhG is no longer the first part of the system. This displacement, however, does not affect the permanent value of the phenomenological science for the education of finite consciousness.

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[35] A reading of the circular relationship between PhG and SL in light of the dialectic of positing and presupposing is offered by Kervégan: “The positing reflection, through which the mediation (here, the science of logic) posits or institutes the immediate [namely the appearing knowledge], and the presupposing reflection, through which the immediate (here, consciousness and the system of its figures) appears as the external condition of the system that reflects upon it, are moments, bounded variables of the system in its dynamic” (Kervégan 2012, p. 202, translation is mine).

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