
Hegel, Spinoza and Heidegger's Critique of Onto-Theology¹

Hegel, Spinoza y la crítica de Heidegger a la onto-teología

RESUMEN: According to a longstanding and still nowadays partially dominant historiographical approach, Hegel's philosophy would be the full achievement and extension of Spinozism following its

ABSTRACT: Según un largo acercamiento historiográfico, aun parcialmente dominante hoy en día, la filosofía de Hegel constituiría el logro completo y la extensión del espinosismo siguiendo sus propios prin-

[1] This paper is dedicated to the memory of Leo Lugarini (1920-2005).

Abbreviations here employed: Phän: *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 9, hrsg. von W. Bonsiepen und R. Heede, Meiner, Hamburg 1980; en. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York 1977. WdL I: *Wissenschaft der Logik*, Erster Teil: *Die objektive Logik*, Erster Band: *Die Lehre vom Sein 1832*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 21, hrsg. von F. Hogemann und W. Jaeschke, Meiner, Hamburg 1985; en. *The Science of Logic*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2010. WdL II: *Wissenschaft der Logik*, Erster Band: *Die objektive Logik 1812-13*, Zweites Buch: *Die Lehre vom Wesen*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 11, pp. 233-409; en. *The Science of Logic*. WdL III: *Wissenschaft der Logik*, Zweiter Band: *Die subjektive Logik 1816*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 12, hrsg. von F. Hogemann und W. Jaeschke, Meiner, Hamburg 1981; en. *The Science of Logic*. E: *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, Erster Theil: *Die Logik*, in *Werke*, Bd. 6, Duncker and Humboldt, Berlin 1840 (Mit Erläuterungen und Zusätzen versehen von L. von Henning); en. *The Encyclopaedia Logic* (with the Zusätze) *Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis-Cambridge 1991. Vorl 9: G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, Meiner, Hamburg 1983, Bd. 9: *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*. Teil 4: *Philosophie des Mittelalters und der neueren Zeit*, hrsg. von P. Garniron und W. Jaeschke, 1986; en. *Lectures on the History of Philosophy. The lectures of 1825-1826*. Volume III: *Medieval and Modern Philosophy*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles- Oxford 1990.

own principles: Hegel would then be a “consequential Spinozist”. Such a historiographical opinion can be brought back to the nineteenth century, and it is shared by, among others, Jacobi, Feuerbach and Nicolai Hartmann. Also Martin Heidegger, as shown in his famous interpretation of Hegel’s subjectivity as the highest expression of the distinguished Onto-Theology of Modern Metaphysics, reaches analogous results to the supporters of the “consequential Spinozism”. Hegel’s notion of concept would ultimately still amount to, also according to his interpretation, the unique and infinite substance of Spinoza – although in the “highest” form of absolute freedom and “immanent thinking”. In my contribution, I shall try to question, first of all, the main assumption on which these readings are based, i.e. that Hegel finds in Spinoza «the fully developed “standpoint of substance”», and then explain why Hegel’s philosophy, far from being a “refutation” of Spinozism still trapped within it, is actually a full alternative program, culminating in a re-evaluation of the same finite and differences, that Hegel saw evaded by the philosophy of Spinoza. In Spinoza «the fully developed “standpoint of substance”», and then explain why Hegel’s philosophy, far from being a “refutation” of Spinozism still trapped within it, is actually a full alternative program, culminating in a re-evaluation of the same finite and differences, that Hegel saw evaded by the philosophy of Spinoza.

KEYWORDS: HEGEL, SPINOZA, HEIDEGGER, SUBSTANCE, SUBJECTIVITY

cipios: Hegel sería por tanto un “spinozista consecuente”. Tal opinión historiográfica puede rastrearse en el siglo XIX, y es común entre otros, en Jacobi, Feuerbach y Nicolai Hartmann. También Martin Heidegger, como mostró en su famosa interpretación de la subjetividad hegeliana como la más alta expresión de la distinguida onto-teología de la metafísica moderna, alcanza resultados análogos a los de quienes apoyan el “spinozismo consecuente”. La noción hegeliana de Concepto en última instancia equivaldría, también según su interpretación, a la única e infinita sustancia de Spinoza –aunque en la forma “más elevada” de la libertad absoluta y el “pensamiento inmanente”. En mi contribución, intento cuestionar, ante todo, la principal asunción sobre la que están basadas estas lecturas, es decir, que Hegel encuentra en Spinoza “el punto de vista de la sustancia completamente desarrollado”, y después explicaré por qué la filosofía de Hegel, lejos de ser una “refutación” del spinozismo, aún atrapada en él, es en realidad un programa alternativo completo, que culmina en una re-evaluación de la misma finitud y las diferencias, que Hegel estimaba descartadas en la filosofía de Spinoza.

PALABRAS CLAVE: HEGEL, SPINOZA, HEIDEGGER, SUSTANCIA, SUBJETIVIDAD

Un libro que no encierra su contralibro es considerado incompleto
(J.L. Borges, *Ficciones*)

1. INTRODUCTION: HEGEL AND THE „CONSEQUENTIAL SPINOZISM“

IT IS A WIDESPREAD IDEA in the realm of philosophical historiography that Hegel turned to the philosophy of Spinoza, as primary model for the formulation of the concept of substance. Undoubtedly – and explicitly admitted by Hegel himself – his whole philosophical itinerary, from his early writings to the last edition of *The Science of Logic*, has been affected by the constant debating of essential elements of Spinoza's theory, and, notably by the re-formulation of his concept of substance. More precisely, in *The Science of Logic*, the reader is finally confronted with, a real showdown with Spinoza: here the debate on substance, is neither episodic nor marginal, but it is the core theoretical issue at stake. The famous programmatic statement of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, «grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance* but equally as *Subject*» (Phän 18; en. 10), is actually carried out.

The correct interpretation of the terms of this debate, or in Hegel's language, of this “refutation”, is then crucial, as to shed light on Hegel's whole theory of subjectivity, if not, as it was recently remarked, on the whole of Modernity².

Whereas consensus with the most established readings of Hegel is on this matter adamant, several difficulties come to the fore whenever a closer inspection of the relationship between Hegel and Spinoza is envisaged, and a consistent interpretation of the arduous and complex transition from “substance” to “subject” is attempted. A long-standing historiographical approach, partially prevailing still nowadays, has insisted that Hegel, despite his clear intention to radically transform Spinoza's concept of substance, would have ultimately fallen back into a configuration not that distant from that of Spinoza.

The reason for that should be found in the structure of the confutation, essentially developing, according to the following steps: (1) Hegel would have recognized Spinoza's substance as «the fully developed “standpoint of substance”», as *the perspective on substance tout court*. (2) He would then have attempted its “dynamization”, developing and transforming it according to a method that is not “geometric”, as in Spinoza, but immanent to the content itself, that is, through the contribution of the “negation of negation”; thanks to this transformation, substance would have discarded the “dead” features of

[2] B. de GIOVANNI, *Hegel e Spinoza. Dialogo sul moderno*, Guida, Napoli 2011.

Spinoza's system – the realm of *necessity* – as it would have been fecundated by the dialectics missing to it, and thus raised to the *freedom* of the concept. (3) However – and this is the crucial point – such a transformation would not have been able to change the fact that, as Spinoza, also Hegel maintains a theory of identity based on a closed system, acknowledging only a single fully rational reality, whose parts are indissolubly and systematically bonded one to the other. Moreover, whether such reality is conceived of as infinite and unique substance holding in itself, in absolute indeterminacy, the essence of everything, or is taken as the reality of the concept, as continuous logic development, as equally constant and necessary dialectic process of the idea, in both scenarios the result would be analogous. Indeed, in both cases, the world, the finite, the individual would still be only accidents of the unique infinite reality, may one wish to call it substance, or concept. Although one may accept that Hegel aims at claiming the real value of world multiplicity – differently from Spinoza, who claimed that the world and all real determinations are absorbed in the absolute unity of *Deus sive natura* –, this latter is still the condition *sine qua non* of the reality of the absolute itself, that outside of this multiplicity and independently from it does not have and cannot have any real consistency. In other words, Spinoza and Hegel, despite their different outlooks, would both aim at a proper final conciliation, be it the blessing contemplation of God, or the “calm” of absolute knowledge: a position where the “salvation of the finite” is only its nullification or its sublimation³. From this perspective, by means of his attempt at overcoming Spinoza's substance, Hegel would have ultimately obtained only its full achievement and extension, and such a manoeuvre would not have allowed him to go beyond the system of one-totality *à la* Spinoza, but rather, it would have made it more consistent. In short, Hegel would be a “consequential Spinozist”⁴.

By thoroughly following such a general opinion, during decades and centuries, certain common lines of interpretation have been developed and applied by otherwise very different readings such as, for instance, the ones provided by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, Ludwig Feuerbach and Nicolai Hartmann. Jacobi, one of the most influential and sharp thinkers among Hegel's contemporaries, in a famous letter dated May 1817, wrote: «Hegel goes beyond Spinozism and reaches a system of freedom, by following a thinking path only even higher

[3] B. de GIOVANNI, *Hegel e Spinoza*, cit., p. 8 ss.

[4] Hegel's approach would thus appear as replicating the strategy that Schelling, in his denigratory reference to Jacobi, called *Consequenzmacherei*. It “amounts to the effort to discover and enlighten, in its most radical features and consequences, that central core of a philosophy accounting for its essence and determining its outcome and meaning, although the philosopher himself is not fully aware or in agreement with it” (V. VERRA, *Jacobi. Dall'Illuminismo all'Idealismo*, Edizioni di Filosofia, Torino 1963, pp. 456-57 [my translation]).

than Spinoza's, and yet identical to it »⁵ According to Feuerbach, Spinoza is "the founder of speculative philosophy", Schelling "its reviver" and finally Hegel "the one who would have accomplished it"⁶. Such an opinion, in its basic lines, has been repeated almost a century afterwards by Nicolai Hartmann, according to whom Hegel's philosophy seems to be a form of Spinozism brought to its "ultimate conclusions"⁷. Also in more recent literature the trend to consider Hegel as an "achiever" of Spinoza's agenda does not seem to fade out⁸.

On this very opinion is based, in my view, Heidegger's renown interpretation of Hegel's logic subjectivity as the highest expression of Modern Metaphysics and of its ontotheologic structure, which unsurprisingly reaches analogous results to the supporters of the "consequential Spinozism". In the seminar lectures entitled *The Onto-Theological Constitution of Metaphysics*, Heidegger emphasizes how:

«In Spinoza, Hegel finds the fully developed "standpoint of substance" which cannot, however, be the highest standpoint because Being is not yet thought equally fundamentally and resolutely as thinking thinking itself. Being, as substance and substantiality, has not yet developed into the subject in its absolute subjectivity⁹»

[5] Cf. The letter to Neet dated 30-V-1817, and quoted by V. VERRA, *Jacobi. Dall'Illuminismo all'idealismo*, cit., p. 232 [my translation].

[6] L. FEUERBACH, *Vorläufige Thesen zur Reformation der Philosophie*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 9: *Kleinere Schriften II* (1839-1846), hrsg. von W. Schuffenhauer, Akademie Verlag, Berlin 1970, p. 243 [my translation].

[7] «The account on the categories of the absolute in Hegel's Logic should be certainly taken as the achievement of what Spinoza wanted: a "geometry" of divine attributes and modes developed according to a rigorously methodical sequence [...] In this respect, Hegel's philosophy appears to be a Spinozist made consistent throughout». N. HARTMANN, *Hegel*, in *Die Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*, De Gruyter, Berlin 1923-29 (2 Bde), p. 46 [my translation].

[8] Among more recent interpretations, see the ones presented by Chiereghin, according to which «Hegel's philosophy, in its main structures, comes out to be an achievement and extension of Spinozism according to its own principles» (F. CHIEREGHIN, *L'influenza dello spinozismo nella formazione della filosofia hegeliana*, Cedam, Padova 1961, p. 178 [my translation] and by SCHMUELI: «I would like to suggest that Hegel's system is Spinozism brought to its full necessary conclusions and to some possible ramification» (E. Schmueli, "Some Similarities between Spinoza and Hegel on Substance", *The Thomist*, 36, 1972, p. 645). Also Vittorio Hösle tries to show that the Encyclopaedia Logic is the *Durchführung* (accomplishment) of Spinoza's and Leibniz' project, despite being achieved through different means and with important restrictions (V. HÖSLE, "Hegel und Spinoza", *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 59, 1997, pp. 79 ss.).

[9] Cf. M. HEIDEGGER, *Die onto-theo-logische Verfassung der Metaphysik*, in *Identität und Differenz*, Neske, Pfullingen 1957, p. 43; en: *The Onto-Theological Constitution of Metaphysics*, in *Identity and Difference*, Harper & Row Publishers, New York 1969, p. 47.

Heidegger agrees, then, that Hegel's concept is still the unique and infinite substance, although in the "higher" form of absolute freedom and self-thinking – and here we cannot but acknowledge the striking similarities to Jacobi's previously mentioned remarks –, and its meaning would amount to the higher being or better to the whole of being¹⁰.

In the following reflections, I shall try to question, first of all, the main assumption on which these readings are based, i.e. that Hegel finds in Spinoza «the fully developed "standpoint of substance"», and then explain why Hegel's philosophy, far from being a "refutation" of Spinozism still trapped within it, is actually a full alternative program, culminating in a re-evaluation of the same finite and differences, that Hegel saw evaded by the philosophy of Spinoza. My remarks will shed light on Hegel's vision of Spinoza, avoiding any discussion of its "exactness" or "fairness". I actually think that in Spinoza's system the finite, differences, and negativity do not disappear or are nullified, as well as in Hegel's program. This means that, in my opinion, Spinoza's system is not a form of "acosmism" - as it is proved, for instance by the notion of *conatus*, unsurprisingly never explicitly quoted by Hegel, despite being strategically used in several points of system. However, this issue would lead us far from the goal of the present enquiry, which is not directly concerned by the "fairness" of Hegel's reading of Spinoza, but rather by the "function" of his concept of substance within, notably, the *Science of Logic*. I shall therefore follow the thread of the role of substance within the development of the Logic in order to grasp one core theoretical issue of Hegel's philosophy. My enquiry shall then be, in this respect, immanent to Hegel's philosophy.

2. SPINOZA'S "STANDPOINT"

Is it true, then, that Hegel finds in Spinoza «the fully developed "standpoint of substance"»? In the reference to Hegel's reading of Spinoza, Heidegger relies on a specific passage of the *Science of Logic*, at the beginning of the Doctrine of the Concept. There, while summing up the main steps leading from the objective logic to the subjective one, i.e. to the overtaking of substance in the concept, Hegel plainly calls upon Spinoza claiming that «the philosophy that assumes its position at the standpoint of *substance* and stops there is the *system of Spinoza*» (WdL III, 14; en. 511). He then acknowledges that, in order to really accomplish the refutation of the system of Spinoza, it is necessary to recognize the standpoint of substance as «essential and necessary», «and then

[10] Such a position was formulated again in its fundamental claim, for instance, by Klaus DÜSING's book *Das Problem der Subjektivität in Hegels Logik. Systematische und entwicklungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Prinzip des Idealismus und zur Dialektik*, Bouvier, Bonn 1976.

raising it to a higher standpoint on the strength of its own resources» (WdL III, 15; en. 512). These statements seem to validate the claim, according to which precisely within substance, in *Spinoza's understanding* of the term, the whole conceptual path leading to subjective logic is condensed and fully achieved. Spinoza's substance would then wrap up the whole movement that, from being through essence (the two articulations of objective logic), reaches the concept. Thus, Spinoza's substance would place itself on a very high standpoint, being the closest introduction to the concept, almost the concept "in itself". Hegel, furthermore, defines it as «a standpoint so lofty and inherently so *rich*» (WdL III, 15; en. 512).

However, a different framework results from a wider perspective on the *Science of Logic* as a whole, beyond the limits of the analysis of this single, although undoubtedly crucial, passage. From the Doctrine of Being, notably in its II edition, a divergent image of Spinoza's substance emerges, in clear contrast with the one previously presented. Spinoza's standpoint is taken as not that "high" and "rich" anymore, but rather, one may say by contrast, as "low" and "poor", i.e. reduced to abstract substantialism. In this regard, one may refer to some repeatedly given accounts by Hegel, such as: «everything is supposed to be reduced to substance, and this is then a sinking of all content into an only formal unity void of content» (WdL I, 325; en. 284); or even «so we can say that with Spinozism everything goes into the abyss but nothing emerges from it.» (Vorl. 9, 105; en. 155). Now, precisely because of this abstract and indeterminate quality, Hegel makes it equivalent, or better, comparable, on the one hand, to the Eleatic being, i.e. the beginning of Western philosophy, and on the other hand, to Induism and "Eastern Emanationism", i.e. forms of thinking that are taken not only in the Logic, but also in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, as preliminary, pre-philosophical even. These are then much "lower" philosophical determinations than the terms of comparison of Spinoza's substance, according to Hegel's project to establish a close parallel between the sequence of philosophical systems and the inference of conceptual determinations of the idea (a project that Hegel does not, however, always consistently pursue). Moreover, by a later addition included only in the second edition of the *Science of Logic*, Hegel makes clear in a lapidary statement that «substance does not (...) ever attain the determination of being-for-itself, even less so of subject and of spirit» (WdL I, 148; en. 129), that amounts to saying that substance can never attain not even one of the first categories of the Doctrine of Being. Such a remark let us wonder how could it be that a substance not even reaching the first level can rise – by itself – to the standpoint of the concept, which, by the way, according to this perspective cannot even be the next standpoint in order.

Similarly, in the second edition of the Doctrine of Being there is also a significant change of direction from the first edition¹¹, as, while comparing his own category of “absolute indifference” (*absolute Indifferenz*) to Spinoza’s substance, Hegel emphasizes that the *absolute Indifferenz* as reformulated by him (that is his category) “may seem” to be the fundamental determination of Spinoza’s substance, but it is actually much deeper than the indifference the type of Spinoza, because notably – as he writes – «substance [as indifference, i.e. Hegel’s category of indifference, A/N] ought not to remain Spinoza’s substance, the sole determination of which is the negative that everything is absorbed into it» (WdL I, 381; en. 332). Hence, provided that Spinoza’s substance does not even reach the first determinations of the Doctrine of Being, it is even “lower” than “absolute indifference”, and it could never accomplish a full standpoint, a consistent speculative arrival point. If so, then, one cannot but wonder: if Spinoza’s substance is equal to abstract substantialism, why should Hegel place it at the end of the Doctrine of Essence – after a whole dialectic development – where the substance actually marks a speculative arrival point and is about to pass into the concept? Here is the *impasse*. It almost seems that there are two Spinoza in Hegel’s mind, one openly burlesk, who is compared to Eleatism and Induism, and the other, recognized as a “serious” opponent, who actually stands for a theoretical achievement¹².

[11] Between the 1st and the 2nd edition of the *Science of Logic*, according to me there is a growing emphasis on the critical approach to Spinoza’s substance and an increasingly strong will in Hegel to take distance from Spinoza himself. Why is that? In order to grasp this, I believe that it can be helpful to take into account that the structure of the Doctrine of Being – the only part of the whole work that Hegel was able to modify before his death – was heavily changed between the first edition in 1812 and the second edition in 1831. The Doctrine of Being of 1831 was indeed modified by Hegel in the light of the Doctrine of the Concept written 1816, so that The Doctrine of Being of 1831 finally played a role that in 1812 was not yet available, that is that of being an exposition of the “negative totality” of the concept, encompassing and preceding all of its determinations, and that is able to posit and transcend them, and through them progressively enrich itself. From this perspective, it seems consistent that Spinoza’s substance, on the other hand, not being a “negative totality” in Hegel’s sense, was increasingly doomed to be, in the 2nd edition of the *Science of Logic*, the abyss where all determinations disappear, not even reaching the level of the first determinations of the Logic, them being already the exposition of the concept itself. On the modified structure of the Logic, see L. LUGARINI, *Orizzonti hegeliani di comprensione dell’essere. Rileggendo la “Scienza della Logica”*, Guerini e Associati, Napoli 1998.

[12] Cf. D. JANICAUD, *Dialectique et substantialité. Sur la réfutation hégélienne du spinozisme*, in *Hegel et la pensée moderne*, J. D’Hondt (ed.), Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1970, pp. 179 ss.

3. THE OVERTURNING OF SPINOZA'S PERSPECTIVE

The overall impression of inconsistency fades as soon as the concept of substance presented by Hegel in the Doctrine of Essence is not interpreted as Spinozist, or better not exclusively as Spinozist. Within the account of the fundamental features of substance, one may still detect the influence of Spinoza, however, despite acknowledging a strong "debt of gratitude" to him, Hegel clearly takes distance and overturns the whole structure to the point of radically transforming the meaning of his concept of substance.

The transformation is developed throughout the whole objective logic, and its details exceed the purpose of the present enquiry¹³. However, a recap of its main steps can be found in a special chapter, towards the end of the Doctrine of Essence, entitled *The Absolute*. Well established historiographical accounts claim that the Doctrine of Essence, and the just mentioned chapter in particular, are "the best place" where to understand Hegel's relationship with Spinoza. It should be remarked first of all that by "absolute", here, Hegel does not mean a metaphysical or religious concept, but rather the unity of all the categorial determinations met so far in the Logic, the merging point of those categories, their "actuality" (*Wirklichkeit*): the absolute is actuality in its immediate stage. Thanks to this peculiarity the here examined chapter accounts for a *sui generis* moment of the *Science of Logic*. Here, the text presents – and this is a rather overlooked aspect – a meta-theoretical insight, including a series of general and structural remarks on the overall process of the *Science of Logic*, without introducing any new determination or category in the logical *Fortgang* (process)¹⁴. This is, for that matter, a *unicum*, as it does not figure in the following editions of the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, as it is only present in the *Science of Logic*. Precisely as it is a sort of meta-category, absorbing in itself, both negated and preserved, all the previous determinations, it recalls the totality of the substance of Spinoza, and to it Hegel makes explicit reference in a subsequent remark, claiming that «*Spinoza's concept of substance* corresponds to the concept of the absolute, and to the relation of reflection to it, as presented here» (WdL II, 376; en. 472). At first glance,

[13] On this matter I refer the reader to my *Sostanza e assoluto. La funzione di Spinoza nella Scienza della logica di Hegel*, Dehoniane, Bologna 2004.

[14] Such an explanatory and recapitulating function of the chapter was made clear in particular by G.M. Wölflé Cf. G.M. WÖLFLE, *Die Wesenlogik in Hegels "Wissenschaft der Logik". Versuch einer Rekonstruktion und Kritik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der philosophischen Tradition*, Frommann-Holzboog, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1994, pp. 430-31. One should also remark that precisely the peculiar nature of the mentioned chapter explains why it has not been included in the *Encyclopaedia*.

this could seem a plain resurgence of the substance according to Spinoza's understanding of it, also because Hegel develops his account according to the fundamental triad of Spinoza's system, i.e. substance, attribute, mode. At a closer look, however, substance *corresponds* to what here is meant by absolute, but it *is not* identical to it. Hegel, indeed, believes that Spinoza only "listed", one next to the other, substance, attribute and mode, and that his task is to thoroughly reformulate such a sequence. This means: whereas in the philosophy of Spinoza the attributes, being determinations of substance, result as negations (according to the principle *omnis determinatio est negatio*, taken up by Hegel as reformulated by Jacobi), and the modes themselves are the negation of the attributes, so that, the two negations added, modes comes out to be the extreme exteriority in which the unique infinite substance is dispersed, according to Hegel's perspective instead, the modes, being negation of negation, reassess the substance, so that their negativity amounts to the "return to the first identity", i.e. to substance itself. The main aim of Hegel's retrieval of Spinoza's sequence is therefore a full reinterpretation of the "mode": the mode is not a plain transitory feature, disappearing in front of the unique infinite substance credited to Spinoza's philosophy; in it there is no difference between accidental and substantial. It has become strictly speaking *actual*. «In actual fact,» – Hegel writes – «therefore, the absolute is first posited as absolute identity only in the mode; it is what it is, namely self-identity, only as self-referring negativity, as *reflective shining* which is posited as *reflective shining*» (WdL II, 374; en. 470). In other words, the linear sequence substance – attribute – mode is transformed into a circular process, where the mode is not the last stage of a progressive nullification, but rather «an immanent turning back», «the self-dissolving reflection» (WdL II, 374; en. 470). It has been rightly remarked that, facing Spinoza's principle *omnis determinatio est negatio*, Hegel enforces the opposite principle, according to which every determination is an immanent reflection: *Jede Bestimmung ist eine Reflexion in sich*¹⁵.

In so doing, Hegel envisages mainly to solve what he considered the most serious issue in Spinoza's substance, that the finite in it was completely nullified. Indeed, Hegel's major concern in relation to Spinoza's substance is not, or not

[15] L. LUGARINI, "Logica e movimento riflessivo", in *Prospettive hegeliane*, Janua, Roma 1986, pp. 121-144. In my opinion, one may grasp how the notion of "correspondence" should not at any rate be mistaken for that of "identity", the two notions being instead almost two poles apart. As the comparison to Spinoza allows to explain, according to Hegel "correspondence" does not entails a relation of identification between two terms, but rather a kind of relation already implying an accomplished transformation.

exclusively, – as it was often claimed – the application of a false method, the geometric one, on which ground the stillness and the isolation of the determinations facing the substance would be established, but it would rather be the issue of the annihilation of the individual. This can be inferred from those famous passages, as those quoted above, where Hegel compares the unique substance to an abyss where every determination disappears. Moreover, one may also refer in particular to the passage, only included in the 1831 edition of the *Science of Logic*, in which it is openly argued that, according to the principle *omnis determinatio est negatio*, the individual, meaning the singular subject, comes out to be fully de-substantialized:

«Also the substantiality of individuals cannot hold its own before that proposition. The individual refers to itself by setting limits to every other; but these limits are therefore also the limits of its self; they are references to the other; the individual's existence is not in the individual. True, the individual is *more* than just restrictions on all sides; but this *more* belongs to another sphere, that of the concept» (WdL I, 101; en. 87, transl. slightly modified).

It is clear, then, from what it has been said that Hegel commits himself to “revise and correct” Spinoza's substance, by penetrating where the opponent's “stronghold” resides (WdL III, 15; en. 512), however applying a revision that will lead him to depart from the unique infinite substance – although it is not “static” anymore but “dynamic” – and to approach a new perspective supporting the restitution of substantiality (where by substantiality one should understand “self-relation”) to those determinations that in Spinoza would appear, as in the “Eastern Emanationism”, as the last offshoots of a gradually fading light.

Thus, Hegel draws on a concept of substance not unique and divine, but individual and finite, that recalls the concept embodied by Leibniz' monad. Unsurprisingly, precisely in the same very section of *The Science of Logic*, Leibniz is praised as, through the concept of monad, he would have enforced the principle of immanent reflection, unacknowledged by Spinoza (WdL II, 378; en. 474). The monad is, indeed, according to Hegel, a *one* in the sense of a negative reflected into itself, that is to say it holds in itself, virtually, all that is real, without identifying to it. This means that the substance monadologically taken is not the totality of the real, as Spinoza's One-all, where any singularity is bound to get lost in the abyss of the undifferentiated, but rather an individual and finite substance, within which, although according to a determined point of view, the totality of the real is preserved¹⁶.

[16] “Leibniz takes individuality, the opposite mode, as his principle, and in that way

This, however, should not lead us to believe that Hegel embraced an idea of substance as Leibniz would have put it; he detects indeed a great limit in the monad as well, that is, its being totally self-contained, thus unable to “externalize” itself, so that the inter-relation between monads cannot be explained but through the stopgap of another being, establishing, or better pre-establishing their harmony, that is their reciprocal influence (WdL II 378; en. 474).

At any rate, the reference to Leibniz’ monad (and to Aristotle, the other philosopher hiding behind Leibniz)¹⁷, being as strong as the one to Spinoza, provides further evidence that Hegel does not take Spinoza as the “fully developed standpoint of substance”, and, most of all, that Hegel’s account of substance is indebted to a multiplicity of different ideas, freed so to speak from the historical and philosophical configuration they are derived from, and unified to the point of engendering a different understanding of substance itself.

In the final paragraphs of the Doctrine of Essence, focusing on the relation of substantiality, the relation of causality and the reciprocity of action, Hegel offers an account of substance aiming at mending the defects of Leibniz’ monad, that is its self-contained closure. In its negative self-reference, Hegel’s substance differentiates itself within itself. The differences are however themselves substantial, i.e. free actualities, each of which is a totality and an immanent reflection, and their reciprocal relation is not only a negative reference, as for Leibniz, but they are all open to the other, in this respect being identical to itself in the other. This amounts to saying that the substance we are now confronted with is neither unique, nor monadologically closed, but it is rather, as Hegel writes in his review of Jacobi’s works in 1817, the source of differences, singularization, individuation¹⁸; such differences show in their turn the circular movement of immanent reflection that Hegel, as we saw, plays against the *omnis determinatio est negatio*. One may say that the dialectic becoming does not allow finite determinations to sink into indifference, ultimately not because true infinity rests on the awareness of the whole within each individual movement¹⁹, but because each individual, being immanent reflection, is itself a whole.

outwardly integrates Spinoza’s system”. (Vorl 9, 105; en. 155).

[17] Hegel refers to the monad as to a reclaimed term, not only in the sense given to it by Leibniz, but also according to Aristotle’s meaning of *entelechy*. Moreover, the text deals here with the category of *Wirklichkeit*, that amounts to, as Hegel claims in a Remark to the Encyclopaedia (E § 142, Z), the point of view of Aristotle’s philosophy.

[18] Cf. G.W.F. HEGEL, *Jacobi-Rezension* (1817) in *Berliner Schriften* (1818-1831), Meiner, Hamburg 1997 p. 3.

[19] “The true infinity is in the consciousness of the totality that is the heart of each individual moment” J. HYPOLITE, *The Concept of Life and Consciousness of Life in Hegel’s Jena Philosophy*, in *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, Harper & Row Publishers, New York-Evanston-San

4. ON THE CONCEPT OF CAUSA SUI AND HEIDEGGER'S READING

Granted that the account here provided is plausible, one should claim – uncontroversially – that looking for the *standpoint* of Spinoza's substance in any given section of Hegel's logic is unhelpful, as it simply does not subsist, given that the *Science of Logic* moves from an already different standpoint and that the concept stems from a kind of substance, which, right from the start, seems to have left Spinoza's substance well behind, being transformed in the way I have attempted to describe here. According to what Hegel actually says in the second edition of the *Science of Logic*, the objective logic explains the articulation of the concept in itself, however Spinoza's substance – and this is clearly emphasized – «is not the concept in itself», «its innermost truth is not constituted by the concept» (WdL III, 40; en. 537). Hence, one may claim that the process of “becoming truth” of the substance in the concept is not the “becoming truth” of substance according to Spinoza's understanding of the term, but, if anything, only according to Hegel's understanding of it.

However, such a reading can be objected by claiming that, once the logic process is achieved in the concept, the underlying presence of Spinoza surfaces again, the “statue” of the philosopher is vivified once again, or even that Hegel provides it with a new life when he retrieves one of the main concepts of Spinoza's philosophy: the *causa sui*. The latter is indeed presented as the truth of the reciprocity of action, the last category of the Doctrine of Essence, and precisely in the opening of the Doctrine of The Concept, Hegel refers to the concept as *causa sui*; he retrieves the etymological meaning of the *causa sui* as *Ursache* («originary fact») and claims that is a «self-causing fact», and that «this is the substance that has been let go freely into the concept» (WdL III, 16; en. 513).

The supporters of the consequential Spinozism hold on to this passage, claiming that in the concept of *causa sui* Hegel would see – after stating in the whole of the objective logic the very stillness of Spinoza's substance and its incapability to “penetrate” the negative – a much higher structure, an intimate and hidden dynamism, allowing it to be the immediate genesis of the concept, the concept in itself. Hegel's pursued task would then be to dynamize Spinoza's unique substance – by activating the “dormant” implicit concept of *causa sui* – thus turning the abstraction or empty identity of substance into conceptual processing. Hegel's notion of concept would thus be the truth of Spinoza's unique and infinite substance.

And this is where we turn again to Heidegger.

According to Heidegger, this solution would be the perfect example of an absolute idea of subjectivity falling into a onto-theological model. Thus, according to what indicated in the already quoted text, *The Onto-Theological Constitution of Metaphysics*, since the *causa sui* amounts to metaphysical concept of God, and Metaphysics must theoretically reach God, then Hegel's theory of logic subjectivity, despite his claim to have overcome Spinozism, would ultimately reveal an onto-theological configuration²⁰. While more generally evaluating Hegel's account on the history of philosophy, Heidegger points to the fact that «for Hegel, the force of each thinker lies in what each has thought, in that their thought can be incorporated [aufgehoben] into absolute thinking as one of its stages»²¹.

On this very point I wish to finally bring the attention of the reader, adding two brief remarks:

I. In the *Science of Logic* the notion of *causa sui* has no primary theological meaning. What actually interests Hegel in the logic domain is not that the *causa sui* amounts to the metaphysical concept of God, but rather what pertains to its *structuring*. Hegel remarks in fact that in virtue of the relation of causality, the effect is given as in opposition to the cause; hence the relation of causality entails an opposition, it enacts a difference. Also the *causa sui* is essentially a positing activity, separating an other from itself, however what it produces, "the other", is equal to itself. Precisely this capability to think the identical in the different, that is the unity as reinstated affirmation, reveals according to Hegel the great dialectic potential of the *causa sui*. This is why – as he writes in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* – it is «a fundamental Notion in all speculation» (Vorl 9, IV, 106, en. 156). The *causa sui* expresses then the structure by which the affirmation results from the negation of the negation, the circular movement of the immanent reflection of the concept and of its determinations. Again in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*²², Hegel reproaches to Spinoza to have been unable to develop "what lies in the *causa sui*"; if he had been able to do it, «substance with him would not have been rigid and unworkable», and the determinations could have dialectically sprung out. Special attention should be here given to the expression "what lies in the *causa sui*".

[20] Cf. M. HEIDEGGER, *Die onto-theo-logische Verfassung*, cit., p. 21; en. p. 62. Heidegger's position on this matter is actually more complex than what it may seem in this text.

[21] M. HEIDEGGER, *Die onto-theo-logische Verfassung*, cit., p. 44.

[22] *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Humanities Press International, New Jersey 1996, p. 484.

II. However, what has been said should not lead us to believe that Hegel's concept results from the dynamization of Spinoza's unique substance, through the "activation" of the included "dormant" concept of *causa sui*. This would mean, as we saw, to fall back into the reading of consequential Spinozism, and ultimately into Heidegger's reading. The self-reflecting movement within the *causa sui* – i.e. immanent reflection – is detected by Hegel not within the unique and infinite substance, but within each individual, one might say, within each "mode". The *causa sui* does not become the immanent movement of the one substance, as presented in Spinoza's terms, but rather of a multiplied substance; not divine, but finite; not unique any more, but plural and individual. Leo Lugarini has rightly claimed that a self-reflecting movement can be discovered only «at the bottom of any and whatever substance»²³. The expression "what lies in the *causa sui*" indicates then, in my opinion, the self-relating movement pertaining to each individual, its dialectical processual development, or, if I am allowed to introduce a new determination, its "internal" finality. The individual is, according to Hegel, is an end in itself.

Here, another of Hegel's favoured interlocutors enters the game, next to Spinoza and Leibniz we meet Kant. "What lies in the *causa sui*" is indeed that non-mechanical relation between the whole and its parts, that is the great achievement of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. For Kant, as it is well known, within a living individuality, each member is an integral part of the whole, which the very organism amounts to. It is the means for the organism's subsistence and life, and at the same time, it is also its end. That is to say, the organism is a form of *self-organization*, in which each part is thinkable «only through all the others» and «for the sake of the others and on account of the whole»; in other words every element produces the others and is reciprocally produced²⁴. Whilst in a machine or an artefact, a part exists for the sake of others, but not through them, in an organism, «as an organized and self-organizing being», a part acquires sense only in its relation with the others and with the whole; at the same time the whole is such only in relation to its parts.

Hegel's finalism, in this respect, is directly grafted on the core of Kant's theory, and it is not, as some interpreters have claimed, a "cosmic" finalism where the individual is blurred to the benefit of a universal theory of life²⁵. Moreover, in the very Doctrine of the Concept of the *Science of*

[23] LUGARINI L., *Orizzonti hegeliani di comprensione dell'essere*, cit. p. 425.

[24] I. KANT, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000, § 65, p. 245.

[25] From this perspective it does not make much sense, in my opinion, to contrast Hegel's finalism and Spinoza's anti-finalism, as some studies actually do (see, in particular P. MACHEREY,

Logic (as well as in the *Encyclopaedia* and in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*) Hegel acknowledges Kant's merits precisely on this matter: «one of Kant's greatest services to philosophy was in drawing the distinction between relative or *external* purposiveness and *internal* purposiveness; in the latter he opened up the concept of life, the idea, and with that he positively raised philosophy above the determinations of reflection and the relative world of metaphysics» (WdL III 157; tr. en. 654).

The latter point about finalism could be widely expanded, well beyond the limits set for this contribution.²⁶ What should however be clearly emphasized here, in conclusion of this essay, is that Hegel's theory of substance was not developed in reference to one single thinker – namely Spinoza –, but how several determinations freed from their historical configuration of appearance merged as to give origin to a substance that is ultimately only Hegel's.

This is what, all things considered, also Heidegger recognized. As he wrote in one of his lectures in Freiburg: «*Hegel denkt die substantia nicht nur nicht griechisch, auch nicht leibnizisch, sondern hegelisch*»²⁷.

Hegel or Spinoza, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2011, originally published in French in 1979). I believe so, not only for the reasons presented concerning Hegel, but also because one should verify beforehand whether Spinoza's theory does not actually entail "hidden" theological elements. On this matter I refer the reader to my *Il vivente e la mancanza. Scritti sulla teleologia*, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2011, pp. 43 ss.

[26] For an in depth analysis on the issue see F. MICHELINI *Hegel's Notion of Natural Purpose*, "Studies in History and Philosophy of Science. Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences", (42) 2012, pp. 133-139.

[27] "Hegel thinks the substance neither in the Greek way, nor in the Leibniz' way, but in the Hegel's way". M. HEIDEGGER. *Die Metaphysik des Deutschen Idealismus. Gesamtausgabe* Bd. 49, Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main 1991, p.49 [my translation].