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THE CLASSICAL CONCEPTION OF TRUTH IN THE LIGHT OF HEGEL'S "LOGIC"

In the introduction to his "Phenomenology of Spirit" Hegel characterizes truth in a general way. Well-known are his formulations in which he acknowledges that truth is the whole and the process of its own becoming. These formulations, however, refer to the general idea of truth, to truth as such, whereas we tend to deal with particular conceptions of this idea, e.g. with the classical or coherence conception of truth. To explain the meaning of the thesis that truth is the whole one has to analyze the relation between the general idea of truth and its particular conceptions - the relation between the whole and its parts. It is obvious that no particular conception of truth can adequately formulate the whole truth; such a particular conception formulates only one of the possible aspects of truth, but not its totality. Hegel maintains, too, that truth is the process of its own becoming. This means that the classical conception of truth is only one of the stages in self-development of the whole of truth. Since this process is logically and historically arranged, the classical conception of truth occupies a place within it, which is not-accidental but determined by the order of the process itself. Hence, my task will be to demonstrate the place which in the whole of truth is occupied by its classical conception. In other words, I would like to show how much of the totality of truth is included in its classical conception.

To this end, I will refer to Hegel's "Science of Logic" as a system of dialectic figures, each of which induces through its internal development a specific metaphysical situation determining - on account of its very specificity - the characteristic way of understanding truth. In other words, particular figures of Hegelian "Logic", such as "being", "essence", "concept", assume

such a metaphysical situation, in which a given - characteristic only of them - understanding of truth becomes possible. This structure of Hegel's "Logic" makes it impossible to point to some abstract, absolutely valid criteria according to which both the classical or any other, particular conception of truth could be definitely rejected or accepted. The criterion which singles out one of the conceptions of truth must be each time relativized to a metaphysical context; the change of the context means also the invalidation of the conception of truth connected with it. And so, e.g. the classical conception of truth is a product of a given, already bygone, historical epoch; it is then a necessary stage in the development of the idea of truth, although it is not the only stage in this development. Hegel's task is thus not to reject or accept any particular conception of truth, but to explain the logic of the process, the constituents of which are these conceptions.

When the most characteristic features of the classical conception of truth are recalled, it is much easier to identify in Hegel's "Science of Logic" the dialectic figure which forms the metaphysical background of this conception. It is known that these features remain in historical connection with the main assumptions of Aristotle's philosophy: "Basing on various points, and especially on those which can be found in the work *De Anima*, one can construct - after Aristotle - the following model of cognition: being acts as a stimulus and creates an impression; to the impression thinking is added and then develops its activity; it reaches back to the being, which in this way from a presumed object of impression changes into the object of thinking and cognition (cf., e.g. *De Anima*, III. 8). In this way, Aristotle may arrive, e.g. at such proposition: also knowledge and impression are called measures of things for the same reason, since it is through them that we get to know something, whereas - in fact - they are not measures of things but are themselves measured by things, *Met.* 1053 a 31. This proposition expresses two ways together: from being to cognition and from cognition back to being; the first way is, however, more important to him... And so, cognition (in the tenth book of *Metaphysics*) gets included as an example in the question of measure; and then it means that knowledge is measured with the cognized object, 105 a 12". The certainty of this cognition "depends, of course, on the receptiveness of the senses.

«Since perception is not true by itself, but there is something beyond it, something that must exist before any perception» that is how it is formulated in the tenth book of «Metaphysics» (1010 b 35)¹. The above quotations serve as good illustrations of the philosophical premise of the classical conception of truth, i.e. the acknowledgment of the fact that being is previous to and independent of our knowledge about it; and that cognition is passive. The stimulus which begins the cognition comes from being, whereas the passive character of sensual reception is the basis of the veracity of knowledge, i.e. of its correspondance with its object. One accepts here being which exist before cognition and which can be reached only through cognition. It means that the classical conception of truth does not concern being whose determinations are still immediate; i.e. such being which is the object of Hegel's analysis in the "logic of being". Being which has still immediate determinations is only introductory, non-problematic premise of that conception. Next, the passive, receptive character of cognition turns it into - as if it were - a moment of being itself; knowledge would be here a way in which being reveals itself - its appearance, and not something utterly external to the cognized object. In Aristotle, certain metaphysical terms (e.g. form) serve in the interests of both logic and physics. "There is then, on one hand, determining and limiting of matter by spatial objects, on the other, determining and limiting of that which is varied in a logical process"². The passive character of cognition leads to the fact that free, subjective, and projecting thinking - i.e. reflection external to things - has no place within the classical conception of truth. Thus, the objective relation being-knowledge excludes any subjectivity, which without free and undetermined by passive reception thinking, is not possible. The classical conception of truth does not concern "subjective logic", either, the one is expounded in Hegelian "logic of concept".

Having this in mind, let us return to Hegel's "Logic" to discover that the metaphysical background of the classical conception of truth is the "logic of essence", or better: the problem of the relation between essence and appearance. In this part of "Lo-

¹ W. J a t a r k i e w i c z, Układ pojęć w filozofii Arystotelesa, Warszawa 1978, p. 34, 35.

² Ibid., p. 61.

gic", Hegel, by giving his own interpretation of old categories, presents the immanent development of the relation being-knowledge presented above. The principle of this development is "reflection", or - as it is used in Hegel - "reflective relating to...". Reflection mediates between being (now: essential being) and its determinations. It must be, however, reflection not yet corrupted by the autonomous, "free" subjectivity: the essence as "the reflective turn towards itself" corresponds to the appearance as "the reflective turn towards otherness". Thus, "the world-in-itself", which is reflectively directed towards itself, corresponds to the world of appearances. The relation of "being-as-an-appearance" to "essential being" depends on the fact that "appearance presents what is essential, and what is essential exists in its appearance". The identity of what is intrinsic (the essence) and what is external (the appearance) is labelled by Hegel as the category of "reality". The task of the reflection is thus to elucidate the internal course of the development of "reality", and not to formulate alternative possibilities for this "reality". As a result we can say that the classical conception of truth, seen in its proper metaphysical context, implies the purely receptive way of attaining knowledge. Knowledge is then the means of passive adaptation - stimulated by external impulses coming to it from being, it arrives at essential determinations of this being and expresses them. Although truth remains the aim of the development of knowledge, this pursuit of truth depends on maintaining the harmony between the external and intrinsic by unilateral adaptation of knowledge to being. Hegel's reasoning in "Logic" shows, however, that this purely objective development which tries not to disturb "reality" necessarily leads to changes.

A different situation appears in the next part of Hegel's work, i.e. in the "logic of concept", where the relation between subject and object is being discussed. The point of departure here is the concept in the form of subjectivity, that is "subjective thinking, reflection utterly external to things". Hegel discusses first the way subjectivity functions, i.e. logic in its traditional, non-hegelian sense, connected with such categories as "judgement", "sylogism", etc. The opposite of the concept in the form of subjectivity is objectivity, which is also a form of the concept. In objectivity the intrinsic differences of the concept are

objective existences. In this way the concept loses its subjectiveness, which it previously, in the starting-point in an immediate way. This situation is resolved when the concept re-gains its subjectiveness, i.e. "when it recognizes its objective world in its subjectivity and its subjectivity in this objective world". So, Hegel starts here from subjectivity, which is then objectivized only to discover in this objectivity its own transformed subjectiveness; objectivity then becomes compatible with freedom. It is conspicuous that the situation presented above forms the metaphysical background for a conception of truth other than the classical one. Let us call this conception "activist" to emphasize the fact that here the impulse which starts the subject-object relation comes from subjectivity. Paraphrasing Aristotle, one could say that it is no longer the cognized object which is now the measure for knowledge, but it is the knowledge itself that is the measure for the cognized object. The subjective character of this knowledge does not mean, however, its arbitrariness. It is the intrinsic moment of a concept which is the "soul of objective existence". The fact that subjectivity belongs to the concept determines certain standards of thinking, according to which the subject has to refer to object - at least in the situation where it realizes its movement towards truth. The subject does not refer here to being, completed and differentiated into "natural" species and types, but rather it objectivizes its subjectiveness, co-constituting and determining the objects which surround it. Hence, truth which find its manifestation in the relation between being and knowledge, must necessarily be relativized to the activity of the subject; the subject - let us repeat - whose thinking is determined by the standards which condition the realization of rational aims.

The difference between the two - presented above - conceptions of truth, the classical and the activist ones, is thus easily observed. If both of them are concerned with the relation of conformity between knowledge and being, then the metaphysical context, different in each case, makes the direction of this relation different too. In the classical conception of truth, the passive and receptive cognition receives stimuli coming to it from being, and tries to reflect the "natural" qualities of being in the possibly most exact way. In the activist conception, on the other hand,

cognition gets "objectivized" in the objects which it projects. In the former case, knowledge is a "appearance" of being, whereas in the latter, being is the "object" of knowledge. Since the classical conception of truth has its metaphysical background in Aristotle's work, one can discover the historical aspect of this difference between the two conceptions in the problem known in modern thought as the "Copernicus revolution". The theoretical revolution made by Copernicus exposes in the most spectacular manner the active function of the subject in cognition. Since then, no longer the passive classification of observational data but the verification of the hypotheses put forward has become the obligatory way of reaching genuine knowledge. The qualitative difference between the context of the classical and the activist conception of truth has thus both historical and metaphysical meaning. The two conceptions function in different systems of categories: the classical conception is closely connected with the relation of conformity in the essence-appearance system, whereas the activist conception is linked with the relation of conformity in the subject-object system. However, apart from the qualitative differences between these two pairs of categories, we can observe and problematize that aspect of the idea of truth which constitutes a necessary premise of the two conceptions analyzed above, i.e. the very relation of conformity. The latter, both in the classical conception and in the activist one, appears only in entanglement: the main problem of these conceptions is not the relation itself, but these elements belonging to them between which it takes place. When we now pay attention to the relation of conformity itself (due to which truth can appear at all) we express our belief that philosophical analysis should not be satisfied with the presentation of the two alternative conceptions of truth, and then with declaring itself for one of them. It should instead identify and describe the premise which enables the differentiation between the classical and activist conception, i.e. the functioning of the relation of conformity itself.

It has been said earlier that the premise of the classical conception of truth is being, which does not have yet any reflective determinations, i.e. being which has not yet been formulated in some knowledge different from it. This very being which has immediate determinations is discussed by Hegel in the "logic of being"

- i.e. in the first part of "Science of logic". The relation between being and its determinations is inaccessible to cognition, since it has an immediate character. The object of knowledge may be only mutual relation between the determinations of being; this means something that - according to Hegel - is "indifferent and external" to being. As a result, the problem of such a being, which has immediate determinations, implies necessarily some other conception of truth, logically prior to the classical one. As it will be demonstrated below, the latter is the coherence conception. Meanwhile, I would like to emphasize that the immediate character of the determinations of being is responsible for the fact that they can mutually turn into each other, e.g. "quantity" into "quality" and vice versa. What is more, the categories which determine of being, cannot be opposed to it - the problem of conformity between being and its determinations does not exist here, since something that immediately determines and expresses being cannot be "incompatible" with this being. Instead, the relation between these mutually convertible determinations is problematized. Hegel's argument leads then to their synthesis: "quality" and "quantity" become united in the category of "measure". The whole argument develops as follows: being in the starting point is a "quality". This determination is then sublated by the fact that it becomes "one of many", i.e. a determination which is no longer qualitative - in other words, "quality" turns into "quantity" which is determination "external" to being. The third determination, i.e. "measure", which unites within itself "quantity" and "quality", is precisely this "externality referring to itself". In this way, being finally attains its determinations not within itself, but in something "external and indifferent" to it - in "measure". It means that the truth of Hegelian "Logic of being" is reached not in the conformity between being and its determinations, but in the mutual conformity of these determinations which is reached in "measure". In this situation, a closer presentation of the way in which Hegel develops the category of "measure" is needed. In his understanding, the development of "measure" - as the connection of qualitative and quantitative moments - should be presented generally as the connection of the "mathematics of nature" with the "qualities of natural things". Hegel emphasizes the fact that such a demonstration of the existence of "a particular connection between

quantitative and qualitative moments, the connection resulting from the notion of concrete object, belongs to particular sciences". In other words, examining the truth of being which has immediate determinations does not remain within the field of interest characteristic of philosophy. According to Hegel, "measure" reaches most completely its quantitative character in the sphere of "mechanism" as the one in which "concrete corporality is nothing more than abstract matter; what qualifies here qualitative difference of matter is in fact the quantitative moment". However, already in the sphere of "organic nature", where relations between particular limbs of animal organism or the proportions of human body are considered, this quantitative character of measure characteristic of mechanics becomes unsatisfactory. "Natural sciences - writes Hegel - are still far away from attaining at least a certain insight into the interdependence between these values and organic functions on which they are utterly dependent". To a still less extent does it come to the development of "measure" in the realm of spirit. Hegel demonstrates as an example how in the developed bourgeois societies groups of individuals belonging to different professions remain in certain relation to each other, but this relation cannot be described in purely quantitative categories - as in mechanics. Also "in the sphere of spirit as such there are differences concerning the intensity of character, the power of imaginations, feelings, ideas etc.," yet the quantitative understanding of intensity or the power of imagination is - according to Hegel - "misty and void". So, the truth of Hegel's "logic of being" realizes itself in particular sciences. These sciences use as their model the sphere of "mechanism" where the quantitative approach to "concrete corporalities" meets with least resistance. Various terms from this sphere, such as e.g. mass, distance, time, weight, can be interpreted quantitatively, without losing - at the same time - their qualitative specificity. Hegel's examples from anatomy, sociology and psychology which I quoted above were to show that these sciences depart already from the "mechanical" model. They can participate in the truth of being which has only immediate determinations only inasmuch as they reduce their systems of determinations to simple quantitative proportions - i.e. inasmuch as they achieve coherence with the primary model. On the other hand, the truth of the "mechanism" sphere reveals

itself only in mutual connections of all the determinations of this sphere. The truth of one determination cannot be stated, since the latter is immediately connected with what is determined within it. The verification of a particular determination can be done only by relating it to other determinations. The coherence of the system of determinations serves as criterion of truth; the rules of belonging to such a system are determined by the "mechanical" model. It is clear that this form of truth cannot be expressed within the classical or activist conception. I think that the coherence conception of truth will be its most adequate formula.

When we treat "Science of logic" as the metaphysical skeleton of Hegelian concept of truth, we throw light on the general idea of truth as the dialectic whole, the parts of which are the three conceptions of truth: coherence, classical and activist. The negative character of this whole results in the fact that it does not at all exist outside its parts; it becomes present, instead, in its parts one after another. The succession, however, is not arbitrary; but determined by the dynamic logic of the whole. When the Hegelian concept of truth is presented, it is not enough to say that within it truth is "totality" and "a process"; one still has to explain the structure of this "totality", i.e. the order in which the stages of the process appear. Moreover, one cannot say that truth is here identical with the last stage of this "process" - as within Hegel's reasoning the ultimate result should be each time treated together with the way by which it has been achieved. So, to show that truth is a process means to show all the stages of this process in logical and historical order that is proper to them. I have shown above how the connections between metaphysical situations presented in different sections of "Logic" and corresponding conceptions of truth lead to the fact that the order in which these sections arrive determines at the same time the order in which the corresponding conceptions appear. In agreement with Hegel, we have here the logic of being-essence-concept and, respectively, coherence-classical-activist conceptions of truth. The aim formulated at the beginning to present the place which - within the whole of truth - is occupied by its classical conception has thus been reached. The sense of this central posi-

tion of the classical conception of truth can be explained as follows: The course of the development of the dialectic whole is, in Hegel, a two-way one, since it belongs to the nature of this whole that its going "beyond itself" (i.e. going beyond the element which on a given stage of the development represents it) is done by its going into itself (Erinnerung). As a result, the argument which develops immanently in "Science of Logic" - each step which forwards the analysis of the development of categories - at the same time moves us back deep into whole, towards the more and more essential dimensions of its existence. It is then understandable that this record of going deeper into whole starts with the section whose structure determines, so to say, the most superficial conception of truth, i.e. the coherence one. The dialectic of the external and the intrinsic, which follows, and the classical conception of truth which is connected with it, serves within the whole as a bridge between the most external and the deepest dimension of whole; the truth of the last one is contained in its activist conception.

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KLASYCZNA KONCEPCJA PRAWDY W ŚWIETLE "LOGIKI" HEGLA

Ponieważ każda księga heglowskiej "Logiki" przedstawia tylko jej właściwy sposób przejawiania się bytu, więc zakłada ona także - określoną przez ten sposób przejawiania się bytu - charakterystyczną wykładnię prawdy. Niedowolna kolejność poszczególnych ksiąg określa wtedy także porządek, w jaki układają się założone w nich wykładnie prawdy. Skorelowanie klasycznej i innych wykładni prawdy z odpowiednimi księgami "Logiki" pozwala więc wykorzystać porządek "Logiki" do odtworzenia struktury całości prawdy, tzn. także do objaśnienia miejsca, jakie klasyczna wykładnia zajmuje zarówno w obrębie całości prawdy, jak i wśród wykładni pozostałych.