

Hegel's Form of Science

Following from my first post about [dialectics as immanent critique](#), the most bare form of Hegel's method, the second of my posts on this shall now concern one aspect of the general method. "But wait, A.W., didn't you say that there *isn't a formulaic method to follow?*" Why, yes I did, and that remains true. *However*, you should not be surprised that something interesting comes up when looking back in retrospect: that though there was no method you could have *assumed* in the workings of the likes of the *Science of Logic*, there is indeed a general developmental form which appears retroactively. This form does not supplant the actual work of science, but serves as a formal pointer to certain characteristics which any science *must* have. What is it?

The Structure of Science

You may have come upon the formula of **{Abstract->Negative->Concrete}** as the supposed formula Hegel gives for his method in the *Encyclopædia Logic*. As I mentioned in my prior post on the introduction to dialectics, this formula is not really a formula *for the immanently critical method itself*; however, this formulation *does actually tell us something important*. It tells us of the *structure of science* (as Hegel conceives it). If we wish to generate *any science* at all, including one of an empirical phenomenon, what we first are to do is to take account of all of our concepts which have any necessary role to play in our science, within which we must find the simple abstract immediate concept which has for its content the generative contradiction which entails all the other concepts as its developments. After the beginning is discovered we can begin the immanent method of dialectical movement, bringing in the other concepts into consideration as they begin to fit moments of development. Science develops itself from the abstract to the concrete, fashioning itself as the organic and self-developing [Universal](#).

History, Experience, And The A Posteriori A Priori

This brings to mind something else of interest, that is, that sciences do not get generated *a priori* until we have already *a posteriori* generated or discovered the concepts which come together to form a science. This is an interesting link which is made by Hegel between two forms of knowledge sometimes considered incompatible; one of pure reason, the other of experience. Hegel here gives not just room, but a place of powerful importance to empirical science in the process of Spirit's knowledge generation. The mode of thinking of Understanding employed by the empirical scientist is uniquely fit for the work of discovery of necessary pieces of science despite the lack of the explicit knowledge of what a true science is or how it is to be developed. Once the general concepts of the system of a science are at hand after the empirical arising

of their structures and discovery thereof—haphazard as such discoveries may be—we are capable of using the method of science to consider the concepts or categories in their pure logical (rational) form as they immanently relate to each other regardless of how they empirically appear.

All of Hegel's sciences show themselves to be a posteriori a priori. The *Phenomenology* recounts forms of consciousness Spirit has already carried out, and a priori develops the forms of consciousness *after the fact* that Spirit has already undergone them all in its history, Absolute Knowing being a final recollection which looks upon the process and sees what has gone on. All forms of consciousness were first discovered in experience. The *Science of Logic* a priori develops the pure categories of thought *after the fact* that Spirit had already had the experience of a history of metaphysical speculation where each category had been at some point discovered, used, and exhausted in some way. Another interesting case of such science is Marx's theory of *Capital*—only in the aftermath of classical political economy did the categories of *economics as such* finally come to be at hand for Marx the (Hegelian) scientist to study, arrange, and develop into a science.

Phenomeno-Logic

Some people seem to think there is a difference of methods across Hegel's work: logical, and phenomenological. It is considered that The *Science of Logic* and the system onward uses a pure logical method, whereas the *Phenomenology of Spirit* uses both the logical method and a phenomenal method alongside it in order to move forward.

I'll make a claim here from my experience of both the *Phenomenology* and *Science of Logic*: **There is only one method in use by Hegel across all works, and it is the phenomeno-logical method.**

If *phenomena* is taken in the sense of *experience as learning*, as it is in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, then it is nothing that should surprise anyone who takes on the task of the *Logic*. In the *Logic* the advancement is made through nothing less than the *experience of pure thinking*, that is, the thinking of thoughts. The *Science of Logic*, one could say, is the phenomenology of pure reason—the science of the experience of pure reason. Every advance in the *Logic* is made upon the recalling of the thinking which has occurred as the springboard for the self-transcendence of thinking through speculation, the thinking of thinking. Reason emerges only in the experience of thinking thoughts. Logic as such only is apparent in what thinking finds as necessarily following from thoughts and thinking.