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Dialetheism as Romanticism and the Hegelian Critique of True Contradictions

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ABSTRACT

Dialetheism is the view that some contradictions are not *per se* false but actually true. Therefore, dialetheists argue that the law of non-contradiction does not hold universally. It is a view held dearly by many dialetheists that Hegel was their modern ancestor. This paper argues that the question of the truth of contradictions is the essential point of departure between Hegel and dialetheism, and that Friedrich Schlegel and the early Romantics were the original precursors of dialetheism, anticipating many arguments that doubted the universal validity of the law of non-contradiction. Ultimately, the paper reads Hegel's critique of romantic irony as a critique of dialetheism.

Keywords: Friedrich Schlegel, Hegel, dialetheism, contradiction, irony

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Dialetheismus zeichnet sich durch die Überzeugung aus, dass einige Widersprüche nicht *per se* falsch, sondern tatsächlich wahr sind. Folglich argumentieren Dialetheisten, dass das Widerspruchsprinzip nicht universell gültig ist. Mehrere Dialetheisten sind dabei der Ansicht, Hegel wäre der neuzeitliche Gründervater der Behauptung wahrer Widersprüche. Dieser Artikel argumentiert, dass Hegel in der Frage nach der Wahrheit von Widersprüchen fundamental vom Dialetheismus abweicht. Vielmehr sind Friedrich Schlegel und die Frühromantiker die ursprünglichen Vorläufer des Dialetheismus, die bereits zentrale Argumente gegen die universelle Gültigkeit des Widerspruchsprinzips antizipieren. Abschließend interpretiert dieser Artikel Hegels Kritik an der romantischen Ironie als Kritik am Dialetheismus.

Stichwörter: Friedrich Schlegel, Hegel, Dialetheismus, Widerspruch, Ironie

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Responding to the problems of mathematical, logical, and linguistic self-referential paradoxes (e.g. the liar paradox, Russell's paradox), dialetheism claims that some contradictions of the form "a & non-a" are irreducible, i.e. that they cannot be eliminated.¹ Dialetheism therefore is the view that some contradictions are not per se false but actually true. Thus, dialetheists argue that the law of non-contradiction (LNC) does not hold universally. According to dialetheism, we should rather accept the truth of these contradictions in our logical systems, languages, etc. than stay within the limits of orthodox logic at the price of metalinguistic hierarchies or the distinction between classes and sets.²

One of the most important representatives of dialetheism, the Australian philosopher Graham Priest, therefore maintains that "there is nothing wrong with believing some contradictions."³ Furthermore, Priest claims that Hegel is one of the most significant proponents of this position, since he had challenged Aristotle's assertion in *Metaphysics IV* that a contradiction cannot be true.⁴ And there is even more to Hegel which Priest finds congenial: more than any other Western philosopher, Hegel allegedly "understood the dialethic nature of the limits of thought"⁵ and maintained that true contradictions are concerned with our conceptual limits of thought.⁶

¹ Elena Ficara, "Dialectic and Dialetheism," *History and Philosophy of Logic* 34 (2013): 35–52, 37. In contrast to dialetheism, a non-dialetheist paraconsistent logic does not claim the truth of contradictions but only "allows the possibility of some contradictions, without triviality automatically following" (Zach Weber, "Atheism and Dialetheism; or 'Why I Am Not a (Paraconsistent) Christian'," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* (2018): 1–7, 2; cf. Francesco Berto, "Is Dialetheism an Idealism?," *Dialectica* 61 (2007): 235–263, 235ff.). Paraconsistent logicians of the second type are agnostic about the question whether there are inconsistent objects in reality (Newton C.A. da Costa/Otávio Bueno/Analice Volkov, "Outline of a Paraconsistent Category Theory," *Alternative Logics. Do Sciences Need Them?* (Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer, 2004), ed. Paul Weingartner, 95–114, 109f. See too: Stefan Schick, *Contradictio Est Regula Veri. Die Grundsätze des Denkens in der formalen, transzendentalen und spekulativen Logik* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2010), 103–120.

² Graham Priest, "The Logic of Paradox," *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 8 (1979): 219–241, 220. For further reading see Graham Priest/J. C. Beall/Bradley Armour-Garb (eds.), *The Law of Non-Contradiction. New Philosophical Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

³ Graham Priest, "What is So Bad about Contradictions?" *The Journal of Philosophy* 95 (1998): 410–426, 410; Priest, "The Logic of Paradox," 219; see too, Jan Lukasiewicz, *Über den Satz des Widerspruchs bei Aristoteles* (Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Olms, 1993), 1; 4.

⁴ Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5. According to Aristotle, LNC ("It is impossible for the same attribute at once to belong and not to belong to the same thing and in the same relation") is the most certain principle of all, "which the student of any form of Being must grasp" (*Metaphysics IV*, 3 1005b; tr. Hugh Tredennick). But already in Plato, one can find quite explicit formulations of LNC (*Politeia* 436b; *Sophistes* 263d; *Symposion* 187 a–b).

⁵ Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought*, 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

For each time we attempt to conceive of an infinite totality, our thinking generates contradictory objects which are both within and without the limits of these (necessarily self-referential) totalities, such as the set of all sets that are not members of themselves, which both contains itself and does not contain itself.⁷ These totalities, as they are conceived by human thought, are both finite and infinite, i.e. dialethic, and exactly therefore truly infinite: “The true infinite is the notion of an object whose finitude is its infinitude, and which is therefore both finite and infinite.”⁸ Only by accepting this contradictory nature of infinity can we grasp its true concept, whereas the separation of finitude and infinity results in a flawed concept of infinity. And since our thinking necessarily tries to grasp these totalities, it is forced to exceed its own limits – despite the fact that it cannot transcend them.⁹ This, according to Priest, was Hegel’s original insight.

In contrast to Priest’s interpretation, most of today’s advocates of Hegel’s dialectics rather deny its affirmation of bare contradictions of the form “a & non-a.” Otherwise, Hegel’s dialectics would lead to the collapse of rational thinking.¹⁰ For according to the rule *ex contradictione quodlibet* (EFQ), a logical contradiction entails everything. Therefore, if one contradiction is true, every arbitrary proposition and also every contradiction is true.¹¹ Yet, dialetheists avoid this consequence by refuting the disjunctive syllogism: $\neg(a \vee b) \Leftrightarrow \neg a \Rightarrow b$.¹² And thus, since Priest does not have to accept EFQ, he can take Hegel’s claim of existing contradictions seriously without accepting the disastrous consequence of trivialism.¹³

⁷ Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought*, 3f.; Gregory Scott Moss, “Dialetheism and the Problem of the Missing Difference,” *SATS* 19 (2018): 1–22, 7.

⁸ Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought*, 108.

⁹ Priest, “The Limits of Thought—and Beyond,” *Mind* 100 (1991): 361–370, 369.

¹⁰ Vittorio Hösle, *Hegels System. Der Idealismus der Subjektivität und das Problem der Intersubjektivität* (Hamburg: Meiner, ²1998), 157; Béatrice Longuenesse, *Hegel’s Critique of Metaphysics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 43. For further reading see Michael Wolff, *Der Begriff des Widerspruchs. Eine Studie zur Dialektik Kants und Hegels* (Berlin: Eule der Minerva, ³2017); Schick, *Contradictio Est Regula Veri*, 279–474. For a deviating view, see Jens Halfwassen, *Hegel und der spätantike Neuplatonismus. Untersuchungen zur Metaphysik des Einen und des Nous in Hegels spekulativer und geschichtlicher Deutung* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1999) and Klaus Düsing, “Identität und Widerspruch. Untersuchungen zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Dialektik Hegels,” *Giornale di Metafisica, Nuova Ser.* 6 (1984), 315–358.

¹¹ Priest, “What is so Bad about Contradictions,” 410f.

¹² Richard Routley/V. Routley, “Negation and Contradiction,” *Revista Colombiana de Matemáticas* 19 (1985): 201–231, 212f.; Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought*, 113ff.; Priest, “The Logic of Paradox,” 226–231.

¹³ Ficara, “Dialectic and Dialetheism,” 35f.; Michela Bordignon, “Contradiction or Non-Contradiction? Hegel’s Dialectic between Brandom and Priest,” *Verifiche* 41 (2012): 221–

Priest's interpretation of Hegel is also relevant for the study of early Romanticism: For scholars such as Strohschneider-Kohrs and others hold that Hegel's dialectics is just the continuation of the early Romantics' discovery of the "antithetical structure of self-consciousness"¹⁴ and their rejection of LNC.¹⁵ Hegel himself allegedly ignored this "intimate spiritual affiliation"¹⁶ between his dialectical logic and the Romantics' use of oppositions and their annihilation of classical logic, particularly, in Friedrich Schlegel's concept of irony.¹⁷ Hegel's "denunciation"¹⁸ of Schlegel's "absolute authority of the ironic I"¹⁹ as an exaggeration of Fichte's subjective idealism ("the insubstantial subjectivity of irony")²⁰ unfairly downplayed the fact that Schlegel's irony is the "essential connecting link in the evolution from Kant to Hegel."²¹ If this is true, it was early German Romanticism and not Hegel who first challenged the universal validity of LNC and "understood the dialethic nature of the limits of thought."²²

245, 245. For Hegel himself, EFQ was not really an issue. Whereas it was already formulated during the Middle Ages, the modern predecessors of Hegel such as Leibniz, Baumgarten, Ploucquet, and Kant, do not mention EFQ at all.

¹⁴ Jochen Hörisch, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft. Der Universalitätsanspruch von Dichtung in der frühromantischen Poetologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976), 58.

¹⁵ Ingrid Strohschneider-Kohrs, *Die romantische Ironie in Theorie und Gestaltung* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, ²1977), 22; Lothar Pikulik, *Frühromantik. Epoche–Werke–Wirkung* (München: Beck, ²2000), 93; Violetta L. Waibel, "'Wechselvernichtung' und 'freywilliges Entsagen des Absoluten'. Friedrich Schlegel und Friedrich von Hardenberg im Dialog," *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus* 6 (2009): 183–210, 202; Steven B. Smith, *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism. Rights in Context* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 200; Marcus Böhm, *Dialektik bei Friedrich Schlegel. Zwischen transzendentaler Erkenntnis und absolutem Wissen* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2020), 11; 73; 105.

¹⁶ Ernst Behler, "Introduction," *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe vol. 10*, ed. Ernst Behler (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1969), xv.

¹⁷ Rüdiger Bubner, "Zur dialektischen Bedeutung romantischer Ironie," *Die Aktualität der Frühromantik*, ed. Ernst Behler/Jochen Hörisch (Paderborn et al.: Schöningh, 1987), 85–95, 95; Behler "Introduction," xvi; Steven E. Alford, *Irony and the Logic of the Romantic Imagination* (New York et al.: Peter Lang, 1984), 17.

¹⁸ Ernst Behler, *Ironie und literarische Moderne* (Paderborn et al.: Schöningh, 1997), 124.

¹⁹ Behler, *Ironie und literarische Moderne*, 126.

²⁰ Otto Pöggeler, *Hegels Kritik der Romantik* (Munich: Fink, ²1999), 43.

²¹ Andreas Arndt, "Zum Begriff der Dialektik bei Friedrich Schlegel 1796–1801," *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 35 (1992): 257–273, 257; cf. Arndt, "Widerstreit und Widerspruch. Gegensatzbeziehungen in frühromantischen Diskursen," *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus/International Yearbook of German Idealism* 6 (2008): 102–122.

²² Fichte, who had a profound impact on the early Romantics, might also be considered for having conceived of the dialethic nature of the limits of thought. Especially his late writings, beginning with the different versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre 1804*, are sometimes considered to overcome LNC and promote contradiction as the moving element of thought. For a more detailed treatment, which is beyond the scope of the present article, see: Schick, *Contradictio est regula veri*, 273–278. For the relation of common logic and transcendental logic both in Fichte's early writings and in his later writings see: *ibid.*, 192–250.

Diverging somewhat from both these interpretations, this paper argues that the question of the truth of contradictions is the essential point of departure between Hegel and the early German Romantics, especially Friedrich Schlegel.²³ To this end, the first part of this paper intends to show that Schlegel and the early Romantics were the original precursors of dialetheism, anticipating many arguments that doubted the universal validity of LNC. The second part analyzes Hegel's concept of contradiction. The final part reads Hegel's critique of romantic irony as a critique of dialetheism.

1. Friedrich Schlegel's Annihilation of LNC

For Kant, LNC is an undeniable principle of thinking and judging. A logical contradiction, since its object is a *nihil negativum*, entails nothing at all.²⁴ Nevertheless, the antinomies discussed in the dialectics of pure reason play a significant systematic role in Kant's critique of pure reason. As these contradictions are implied in the speculative concept of the absolute or unconditioned, which is beyond any possible experience, they reveal the transcendental illusion which underlies pure reason's attempt to transcend the limits of experience.²⁵ Since reason cannot deny the validity of LNC, the absolute must lie beyond our capacity of pure reason.

In contrast to Kant, Friedrich Schlegel draws exactly the opposite consequence from the contradictory character of the idea of the absolute: the antinomies do not prove the human mind's incapability to conceive the absolute but the limited validity of LNC. Common logic, which is based upon LNC, is not the organon of *all* thinking but just of lower thinking. Since grasping the absolute demands a higher logic, some higher mental activity has to transcend LNC. Even more, the destruction of LNC is the first and

²³ As Arndt correctly points out, for Schlegel, unlike Hegel, contradiction is not the dialectical engine immune to all self-movement but just the limit of logical comprehension (Arndt, "Perspektiven frühromantischer Dialektik", 61). This supports Bowie's and Millán-Zaibert's thesis that the absolute for the Romantics cannot be grasped by reflection, and this is therefore a crucial factor distinguishing early Romanticism from Hegel. See Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, *Friedrich Schlegel and the Emergence of Romantic Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 37. It also supports Manfred Frank's thesis of the autonomy of early Romanticism in relation to Hegel. Cf. Manfred Frank, „Unendliche Annäherung“. *Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp), pp. 21; 23f.

²⁴ *KrV B*, AA 3, 233; 399. Writings by Kant are quoted from: Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften and Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin and Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen (Berlin: 1900ff.) (= AA).

²⁵ *KrV A*, AA 4, 07.

foremost presupposition for the human mind to apprehend the absolute.²⁶ The logical faith in LNC is just based upon an ill-founded dogmatic article drawing upon a kind of religious furor,²⁷ whereas both our everyday and our scientific experience contradict this faith and confirm the existence of contradictions:²⁸

What finally also proves the uselessness of [this principle] is [t]he principle that we use in common life and are taught by experience, namely that *life* and absolutely everything rest upon *contradictions*—further, the similar proposition of physics that everything in nature rests upon *oppositions* and exists through *oppositions*—but still more the *contradictions* about *one* and *the same* object among different sciences and on different systems.²⁹

Therefore, the “antinomies should not have moved Kant to dismiss the absolute, but the *law of non-contradiction*.”³⁰ But Schlegel goes even further: Contradictions are not only an unwanted but inevitable side-effect of our attempt to grasp the absolute, but in connecting otherwise incompatible opposites, contradictions are true expressions of the absolute:

If one becomes infatuated with the absolute and simply cannot escape it, then the only way out is to contradict oneself continually and join opposite extremes together. The principle of contradiction is inevitably doomed, and the only remaining choice is either to assume an attitude of suffering or else ennoble necessity by acknowledging the possibility of free action.³¹

²⁶ As Schlegel’s fellow Romantic Novalis puts it: “To annihilate the law of non-contradiction is perhaps the highest task of higher logic.” (*Fragments and Studies 1799–1800*, HKA III, 570; cf. 402.) Writings by Novalis are quoted from: Novalis, *Schriften. Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe in sechs Bänden*, ed. Paul Kluckhohn, Richard Samuel, Hans-Joachim Mähl, Gerhard Schulz et al. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960-...) (= HKA).

²⁷ “One expects everyone else to believe in [it] and excommunicates everyone acting against [it].” (*Philosophical Fragments* II/I, frgt. 1314, KFSa 18, 303.) Writings by Schlegel are quoted from: Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Ernst Behler et al. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1959ff.) (= KFSa).

²⁸ *Philosophical Fragments* I/III, frgt. 2, KFSa 18, 123.

²⁹ *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 321. Apparently, Schlegel does not distinguish between different types of opposition in order to justify his position about contradictions in reality.

³⁰ *Philosophical Fragments* II/II, frgt. 1080, KFSa 18, 410.

³¹ *Blütenstaub*, frgt. 26, KFSa 2, 164; tr. Peter Firchow, *Friedrich Schlegel. Philosophical Fragments* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 17. As Novalis puts it: “The highest representation of the incomprehensible is synthesis – unification of the incommensurable – positing of contradiction as non-contradiction.” (HKA II, 111.)

Unlike Kant, Schlegel does not decide to remain affectedly passive but postulates the position of contradictions in order to express and conceptualize the absolute. Giving a detailed argument for the abandonment of the universal validity of LNC, his choice is far from being arbitrary:

1. LNC maintains “that an object cannot be and at the same time not be.”³²
2. This proposition is nothing but the inversion of the law of identity (LI) “a is a.”³³
3. LI presupposes the persistence of “a.” Otherwise, a₂ in “a is a” can not be identical with a₁.³⁴
4. Therefore, LI presupposes the idea of “a substance which is identical with itself, immutable, and persistent.”³⁵ Or, put differently, one can only apply LI and LNC to persistent substances or thing-like entities.³⁶
5. Hence, the universal validity of LI and LNC depends on the ontological assumption that all beings are essentially immutable substances or that the whole of reality comprises a sum of persistent things – a presupposition generally ignored by Aristotelian logicians.³⁷
6. Any entity which is not thing-like is at the same time non-identical and one can only explicate such an entity in contradictory propositions.

The great question for Schlegel – and Novalis as well – now is whether there are any entities which are not thing-like and need to be explicated in contradictory propositions. And, indeed, one can find three types of reality which force us to transcend both LI and LNC in Schlegel and Novalis.

A: In Novalis’ *Miscellaneous Remarks*, we find the following statement: “Everywhere we *seek* the unconditioned [*das Unbedingte; the un-thing-ified*], and

³² *Propaedeutics and Logic*, KFSa 13, 258.

³³ *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 318.

³⁴ “While one is saying a=a, a already is not a anymore; this refers to what the proposition presupposes without mentioning it, namely the principle of persistence, whether one ascribes it to the thing or the I.” (*The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 318.)

³⁵ *Propaedeutics and Logic*, KFSa 13, 260.

³⁶ “Doubts against the concept of a persistent substance, if they were really justified and there would not be an a in this sense, [would] completely annihilate the theoretical validity of the principles of identity and non-contradiction.” (*Propaedeutics and Logic*, KFSa 13, 260.)

³⁷ *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 249; 317; *On Philosophy* 1805/I, frgt. 113, KFSa 19, 53. Lukasiewicz will come to the same conclusion more than 100 years later (Lukasiewicz, *Über den Satz des Widerspruchs*, 107; 135).

we *find* merely things [*Dinge*].”³⁸ For the early Romantics, by definition, the absolute as the unconditioned (“das Un-bedingte”) cannot be a thing (“Ding”). And since the absolute is not a thing, LNC cannot apply to it. Kant’s antinomies therefore do not reveal the unknowability of the absolute but its non-thing-like and therefore contradictory nature. Kant correctly calls contradictory entities an absurdity (“Un-ding”),³⁹ but misconceives the absolute as a thing and not as an “Un-Ding.” Therefore, he submits it to the Aristotelian logic of non-contradiction and limits the use of reason to finite, conditioned entities, whereas for Schlegel, confronted with the antinomies of pure reason, reason has to realize that in the face of the absolute one has to acknowledge the truth of contradictions.⁴⁰ Since all true infinities are at the same time absolute, only finite conditions, which are restricted to a specific time and a specific place, are subject to LNC. Any explication of the absolute, however, must synthesize antithetical concepts or propositions in order to point out that the restrictions of finitude do not apply to it:⁴¹

Whoever has a sense for the infinite and knows what he wants to do with it sees here the result of eternally separating and uniting powers, conceives of his ideals at least as being chemical, and utters, when he expresses himself decisively, nothing but contradictions.⁴²

Kant’s “ideas” and “ideals” (the instantiations of an idea in an individual) are the most prominent examples of such infinite and unconditioned beings, which “are all based on synthesis and contradiction, floating, and oscillating.”⁴³ In the language of Priest, these infinities are true *dialetheias*.

But Schlegel goes even further than to consider only infinite entities as dialethic. From an absolute point of view, no real being is subject to Aristotle’s substantial ontology and therefore to LNC. Only within the limits of our everyday praxis is LNC a useful tool, whereas its use in philosophy is

³⁸ *Blüthenstaub*, HKA II, 413; tr. Terry Pinkard, *German Philosophy 1760–1860. The Legacy of Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 145. Similarly, Schelling writes in *Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy*: “For absolute (unbedingt) is that which is not turned into a thing, not at all can turn into a thing.” (KSA I,2, 89.) Works by Schelling are quoted from Schelling, *Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Jörg Jantzen, Wilhelm G. Jacobs et al. (Frommann-Holzboog: Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1976ff.) (= KSA).

³⁹ *KrV B*, AA 3, 233.

⁴⁰ Cf. also Bärbel Frischmann, *Vom transzendentalen zum frühromantischen Idealismus. J. G. Fichte und Fr. Schlegel* (Paderborn et al.: Schöningh, 2005), 152.

⁴¹ *On Philosophy* 1805/I, frgt. 289, KFSa 19, 71.

⁴² *Athenaeum* frgt. 412, KFSa 2, 243; tr. Firchow, *Philosophical Fragments*, 83. Schlegel goes even further: “Everything which is of any value at all, has to be this and the opposite at the same time.” (*Philosophical Fragments* I/II, frgt. 633, KFSa 18, 82.)

⁴³ *Philosophical Fragments* I/III, frgt. 4, KFSa 18, 123.

“completely reprehensible.”⁴⁴ Since the absolute is not isolated from the realm of finitude but is its ground, its totality, and its all-unity, both realms cannot be opposed in an absolute manner. The reality outside of the I is not just Fichte’s thing-like *Not-I*, but a vital *you*.⁴⁵ “The world is an infinite I coming into being” or “*a deity coming into being*.”⁴⁶ Therefore, to conceive finite entities in their truth means to conceive them in their relation to their ground, i.e. *sub specie infinitatis*, and hence not as persistent substances but as organisms, which are kinds of totalities and unities. Not substantiality but organicity is the true mode of being of finite objects.⁴⁷ In contrast to the Aristotelian ontology of substances, real beings in their truth therefore are organic unities which undergo permanent change.⁴⁸ Therefore, as far as it is truly real, everything partakes in the absolute and, as a consequence, is contradictory.

*A**: We have just seen that for Schlegel, the absolute is opposed to LNC ($a \wedge \neg a$), which only holds for finite and dependent beings. But one also finds another view in Schlegel which seems to fly in the face of the things said thus far. According to this view, it is exactly the limitation of finite beings which makes them subject to contradictions. In contrast, the absolute in itself is beyond all contradictions but unfolds itself in an infinite overabundance of opposed finite beings. Whereas its mutually dependent elements entail contradictions, the absolute itself supersedes all oppositions:

The whole is consistent with itself, only in its elements are there contradictions; both, the condition and the contradictions, dissolve into the *singular*, unitary absolute.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 320; 350; *Athenaeum* frgt. 83, KFSa 2, 178. The same idea can be found in Lukasiewicz, *Über den Satz des Widerspruchs*, 167: “The law of non-contradiction is not of any logical value but in its nature only practical-ethical.”

⁴⁵ *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 350.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 339.

⁴⁷ Alford, *Irony and the Logic of the Romantic Imagination*, 9.

⁴⁸ Of course, according to some interpreters, Aristotle’s concept of substances is itself modelled according to his concept of organisms and his concept of generation as actuality coming into being is designed to resolve certain contradictions that seem to trouble our experience of reality. Even according to Schlegel himself, the concept of coming into being resolves many contradictions evolving in the science of the I: “Only through the concept of coming into being and the dismissal of all being was it possible to solve the antimony of sensation and with it the whole riddle of our I.” (*The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 338.)

⁴⁹ *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 321.

Contradiction inheres all things insofar as they are reifications and therefore finitisations of the infinite absolute.⁵⁰ Accordingly, oppositions only have a “relative validity”⁵¹ and contradictions are only true “in a relative manner for the elements, and not for the whole,”⁵² such that “higher reflection” has to annihilate all oppositions when thinking and speaking about the absolute.⁵³ Whereas finite beings are contradictory, the absolute is above all oppositions. It is the indifference of two opposed errors.⁵⁴ Thus, it is less opposed to LNC but rather opposed to the law of the excluded middle $\neg(a \vee \neg a)$ (LEM) whereas finite entities are opposed to LNC.

Before we relate these two types of contradictions to each other, let us first focus on the methodological implications of Schlegel’s dialetheism *avant la lettre*: We have seen that for both Schlegel and Priest, infinities imply true contradictions. Insofar, Schlegel anticipates dialetheism. But despite these obvious similarities, there is an important difference between Schlegel’s and Priest’s dialetheism, which mostly concerns the methodology of how both deal with true contradictions. As already noted, Priest in his paradoxical calculus avoids the triviality of his dialethic logic by refuting the disjunctive syllogism and EFQ. In contrast, Schlegel affirms EFQ since both LNC and the law of sufficient reason (LSR) can only be applied to persistent substances (things).⁵⁵ Yet, as we already know, whenever some entity implies a true contradiction, it cannot be a thing. As a consequence, LSR does not apply to dialethic beings either. Therefore, higher thinking is not determined by both these laws of logic. As a consequence, true contradictions indeed do not have a determinate result. But for Schlegel, this does not imply triviality. Just as for Priest, a true contradiction does not make any proposition or contradiction true. True, since LSR has become invalid, there is no logically determined rule for the sequence of thoughts determining a contradictory being. But we have to keep in mind that we are not in the realm of common thinking, but in the realm of higher thinking, and this is only known to the romantic poet. Only romantic poetry is truly infinite as it “recognizes as its first commandment that the [arbitrary] will of the poet can tolerate no law

⁵⁰ Andreas Arndt, “Perspektiven frühromantischer Dialektik,” *Das neue Licht der Frühromantik. Innovation und Aktualität frühromantischer Philosophie*, ed. Bärbel Frischmann and Elizabeth Millán-Zaubert (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2009), 53–64, 56

⁵¹ *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSA 12, 321.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 335.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 92. Cf. Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung*, 523f. who maintains that both Schlegel and Novalis championed a coherence theory of truth, pp.523f.

⁵⁵ *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSA 12, 249.

above itself.”⁵⁶ Because it is not determined by the rules of logic anymore, the poetic imagination is set free to establish logically unfounded propositions. And this is the only appropriate mode to represent the absolute: “Only through the imagination, are we able to think and synthesize what is contradictory.”⁵⁷ Contradictions concerning the absolute entail the annihilation of LSR with the result that the ingenious poetic imagination can proceed freely now. Put differently, the logical annihilation of logic results in the apotheosis of the poetic imagination. The positive result of the annihilation of LSR together with LNC is poetic freedom. Only the poetic genius, not the philosopher who is restricted by Aristotelian logic, can express the absolute which transcends all oppositions: “*inducing* and *correlating* (therefore the whole of *sylogistics*) must perish with the *conditioned*, according to the strict doctrine of the absolute.”⁵⁸ True philosophizing for Schlegel is in no need of a logical methodology or a deductive system, but of a poetic spirit. This spirit “consists of continuous contradictions”⁵⁹ and cannot “be taught by some methodology, it is immediate and cannot be communicated.”⁶⁰ Resulting in contradictions, philosophy annihilates itself as philosophy and becomes poetry.⁶¹ Where the philosopher only has “night-lamps,” the poet walks “by the light of revelation.”⁶²

The result of a true contradiction is thus in some way Kant’s *nihil negativum*,⁶³ but it is a prolific nothing setting free the romantic genius’s poetic imagination as an “arbitrary, and therefore free thinking”⁶⁴ and an “inner, free, arbitrary thinking and poetizing”⁶⁵ with the power to create from nothing.⁶⁶ The annihilation of logic and LSR logically justifies the poetic logic of the imagination. Only romantic poetizing is truly free, since it recognizes no law above itself. And only in acts of freedom, can one present the absolute. Therefore, it is only the poetic imagination that can present the absolute, and not logical reasoning, which is still bound by the laws of logic.⁶⁷ Contrary to

⁵⁶ *Athenaeum* frgt. 116, KFSa 2, 183; tr. Firchow, *Philosophical Fragments*, 32.

⁵⁷ *System of Transcendental Idealism*, KFSa I, 9,1, 326f.

⁵⁸ *On Philosophy*, KFSa 19, 73f.

⁵⁹ *Philosophical Fragments* I/II, frgt. 192 KFSa 18, 36.

⁶⁰ *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 350.

⁶¹ Alford, *Irony and the Logic of the Romantic Imagination*, 42.

⁶² *Athenaeum* frgt. 131, KFSa 2, 186; tr. Firchow, *Philosophical Fragments*, 35.

⁶³ Klaus Vieweg, *Philosophie des Remis. Der junge Hegel und das ‚Gespenst des Skepticismus‘* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1999), 189.

⁶⁴ *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 358.

⁶⁵ *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 359.

⁶⁶ Cf. also Vieweg, *Philosophie des Remis*, 188.

⁶⁷ As Novalis puts it: “Poesy is the true absolute real. That is the core of my philosophy. The more poetic, the more true.” (*Preliminary Works*, HKA II, 647; tr. David W. Wood.)

the philosopher sticking to lower logic, the Romantic's imagination is not subjected to the concept of things, but can create figurative or symbolic expressions of the absolute. These figures and symbols are anti-things, brought about by the I "to free itself from the domination of things, the non-Is."⁶⁸ In her production of symbols and figures, the productive genius expresses the absolute. Whereas reason by its tendency to unify and harmonize everything cannot accept true contradictions and therefore necessarily falls short of the absolute and life, imagination by its acceptance of true contradictions comprehends the absolute and "life in its rich contradictoriness and individuality."⁶⁹

Whereas this affirmation of EFQ by Schlegel apparently contrasts with Priest's dialetheism, one can find a similar idea in the later Wittgenstein. According to Wittgenstein, the prohibition of contradictions means nothing more than to make use of a system with some great pragmatic advantages. But this does not imply that one cannot employ contradictions. For example, one might intentionally produce logical contradictions just to prove "that everything in the world is uncertain."⁷⁰ Furthermore, a contradiction might also tell us: "Do as you wish, I, the calculation, do not decide it. [...] One might conceive this as a hint of the Gods that I shall act and *not* reflect."⁷¹ In this sense, Schlegel explicates the philosophical advantages of true contradictions: they reveal that the absolute cannot be represented within a philosophical system. With LNC, the "logical fiction"⁷² of a system loses its philosophical value too. For a philosophical system, it is essential that each of its elements has a determined place within the system according to a sufficient reason. But since LSR, confronted with the absolute, has lost its value together with LNC, the absolute cannot be represented within a coherent system. This is why Schlegel does not represent the absolute in a system but in contradicting fragments. Only a fragment can "capture the sense in which what cannot be 'represented' in consciousness can nonetheless be 'hinted at' in art."⁷³ The connection and sequence of these fragments is not necessitated by LSR but by the free imagination of the poetic genius. Thinking the absolute is not supposed to follow any given rules or to be

⁶⁸ *The Development of Philosophy in Twelve Books*, KFSa 12, 359.

⁶⁹ Behler, *Ironie und literarische Moderne*, 105.

⁷⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Bemerkungen über die Grundlagen der Mathematik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 211.

⁷¹ Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*. The Bergen Electronic Edition. Text only version, Oxford et al. 1999 (Abbrev. according to v. Wright Catalogue), MS 127, p. 83.

⁷² *Philosophical Fragments* II/I, frgt. 1348, KFSa 18, 306.

⁷³ Pinkard, *German Philosophy*, 160.

subordinated to any principles.⁷⁴ Instead, it has to begin with ungrounded and at the same time contradictory propositions. Since one fragment can only express a limited and definite thought, the single fragments have to contradict each other to express the absolute:

Not only must philosophy begin with *unfounded* propositions, but also with *contradictory ones*.⁷⁵

Each fragment either expresses a or non-a, i.e. each thought can only express a limited thought that is opposed to another thought. Therefore, the absolute itself is absolutely opposed to the thoughts articulated in a fragment.⁷⁶ For as we have already seen, the infinite absolute transcends all contradictions (A^{*}). But propositions about the infinite absolute are finite, as they attribute finite predicates to the absolute. Thus, we have a new type of contradiction A^{**}, namely the contradiction between the necessary finitude of our propositions and the infinity of the absolute.⁷⁷ Therefore, since we can only express the absolute in finite thoughts, we have to express it in paradox thoughts (by contradictions of type A).⁷⁸ Only by violating LNC, i.e. in pairing opposed thoughts, can we express the absolute, which is beyond all contradictions, through finite thoughts. Schlegel calls this kind of self-contradicting discourse: *ironic*.⁷⁹ This self-contradiction is not something we have to overcome, but the defining feature of romantic irony and the only possible expression of the absolute through finite thoughts in spite of A^{**}, since it also expresses the impossibility to communicate the absolute by finite thoughts.⁸⁰ As we are at the same time finite and infinite beings we cannot give up thinking about the absolute.⁸¹ But we can never fully justify any thought about the absolute, since finite thoughts cannot articulate the infinite. Irony

⁷⁴ Böhm, *Dialektik bei Friedrich Schlegel*, 99. The connection of the fragment and freedom is also pointed out by Bubner: “For the fragment manages to leave things open, things that can themselves be thought out further through the unconstrained freedom of subsequent recipients and later generations.” Bubner, *The Innovations of Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 192.

⁷⁵ *Philosophical Fragments* II/II, frgt. 1045, KFSa 18, 407.

⁷⁶ Manfred Frank, “Philosophische Grundlagen der Frühromantik,” *Athenäum* 4 (1994): 37–130.

⁷⁷ Beiser, *German Idealism*, 408.

⁷⁸ *Lyceum*, frgt. 48, KFSa 2, 153.

⁷⁹ *Athenaeum*, *Ideas*, frgt. 69, KFSa 2, 263.

⁸⁰ Lore Hühn, “Das Schweben der Einbildungskraft. Zur frühromantischen Überbietung Fichtes,” *DVjS* 70 (1996): 569–599, 571. Alford, *Irony and the Logic of the Romantic Imagination*, 60.

⁸¹ Bärbel Frischmann, “Was ist ironistische Philosophie?,” *Das neue Licht der Frühromantik. Innovation und Aktualität frühromantischer Philosophie*, ed. Bärbel Frischmann and Elizabeth Millán-Zaubert (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2009), 80–93, 82.

therefore is the appropriate mode to communicate both our inescapable commitment to and our inescapable detachment from the absolute or both our finite and infinite nature.⁸² Ironic discourse, therefore, is “the continual self-creating interchange of two conflicting thoughts,”⁸³ the “constant alternation of self-creation and self-destruction.”⁸⁴ According to Schlegel, Socratic irony already produced this feeling “of indissoluble antagonism between the absolute and the relative, between the impossibility and the necessity of complete communication.”⁸⁵ In this sense, the method of all philosophy has to be ironic or Socratic.⁸⁶ This irony is the result of a unity which is always absent, but at the same time intended by romantic discourse. Ironic discourse therefore necessarily formulates true contradictions. The absolute, since it is infinite, can only be expressed by *dialetheias*, but these syntheses of antitheses do not express the absolute in itself or give a true definition of its very own nature but rather our relation to the absolute:⁸⁷

Irony makes us aware of the tensions between our limitations and the infinite nature of the Absolute, between what we can know and the vast expanse of what remains to be known. Any attempt to *completely* communicate the Absolute or the infinite is futile. Yet the philosopher has a duty to make this impossibility apparent, and the philosopher does this by revealing the limitations of philosophy itself and the need to go beyond its traditional borders in search of broader ones.⁸⁸

2. Hegel on LNC

At first glance, Hegel’s view on LNC is quite similar to that of Schlegel and *dialetheism*:

- a) Hegel apparently questions the universal validity of LNC⁸⁹ and affirms the truth of contradictions, for example in his habilitation-thesis: “*Contradictio est regula veri, non contradictio falsi.*”⁹⁰ Revealing the

⁸² Pinkard, *German Philosophy*, 160f.

⁸³ *Athenaeum*, frgt. 121, KFSa 2, 184; tr. Firchow, *Philosophical Fragments*, 33.

⁸⁴ *Athenaeum*, frgt. 51, KFSa 2, 172; tr. Bubner, *The Innovations of Idealism*, 211. Cf. also Beiser, *German Idealism*, 448f.

⁸⁵ *Lyceum*, frgt. 108, KFSa 2, 160; tr. Firchow, *Philosophical Fragments*, 13.

⁸⁶ Bubner, *The Innovations of Idealism*, 202.

⁸⁷ Irony in this sense means the “absolute synthesis of absolute antitheses” (*Athenaeum*, frgt. 121, KFSa 2, 184).

⁸⁸ Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, “Borderline Philosophy? Incompleteness, Incomprehension, and the Romantic Transformation of Philosophy,” *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus* 6 (2008): 123–144, 131.

⁸⁹ Rolf-Peter Horstmann, *Die Grenzen der Vernunft* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann 1991), 170.

⁹⁰ *Habilitation Thesis*, GW 5, 227.

claim “that there is nothing contradictory”⁹¹ as a simple prejudice of previous logic, Hegel maintains that there is nothing which is not subject to contradiction, i.e. opposing determinations.⁹² By summoning our everyday experience that there are countless things, theories, and institutions which contain a contradiction, Hegel comes close to Schlegel.

- b) And there is more in Hegel which is congenial to Schlegel: Just like Schlegel, Hegel does not consider contradictions as “contingencies,” “abnormalities,” or pathological paroxysms, which occur every now and then, but as “the root of all movement and vitality.”⁹³ Hegel therefore considers Kant’s “proposition of the *necessity of contradictions*” as one of Kant’s most fundamental philosophical insights.⁹⁴
- c) Hegel criticizes Kant’s solution of the antinomies as an unjustified “tenderness” for the *world*, which forces him to remove the contradiction from reality and to blame our thinking for the antinomies of reason.⁹⁵
- d) Unlike Kant and exactly like Schlegel, Hegel considers the contradiction as “the elevation of reason above the limitations of understanding and its dissolution.”⁹⁶

Despite these apparent similarities, Hegel’s logic of reflection in the *Science of Logic* reveals striking differences between his own view and Schlegel’s view. First of all, the denial of LNC does not transcend common thinking but is still entangled in it. The alternative to *either* affirm *or* abnegate the validity of LNC means to *either* affirm *or* negate one opposite of a contradiction in its isolation while excluding the opposing one. Sustaining this either–or, one’s thinking is still subjugated to common understanding’s LEM. Schlegel’s annihilation of LNC therefore fails his speculative claim to overcome the abstract logic of common understanding. To overcome common logic’s LNC effectively, one must not annihilate common thinking but apprehend it. This means to explicate LNC’s presuppositions which are unknown to common thinking. The untruth of common logic consists in its abstraction from the speculative interrelations of identity, difference, opposition, and contradiction which constitute these determinations of thought that underpin LNC,

⁹¹ *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 286.

⁹² *Encyclopedia* 1830, GW 20, 129.

⁹³ *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 287.

⁹⁴ *Ohlert Review*, GW 16, 279.

⁹⁵ *Science of Logic* 1832, GW 21, 232.

⁹⁶ *Science of Logic* 1832, GW 21, 30. Cf.: *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 258 and 287.

LI, and LEM:⁹⁷ the determination of identity, which common logic conceives as abstract equality for example, is constituted by the abstraction from any difference. This abstract identity is understood as the very determination of thought which is *not* difference but “different from difference.”⁹⁸ Thus, it is in fact essentially established by its opposition to difference and determined by its exclusion of difference. Despite being conceived as pure identity, it is “something different.”⁹⁹ The concept of pure or abstract identity, therefore, is self-contradictory, since it is supposed to exclude all difference but is at the same time determined by its difference from difference.

In contrast to speculative logic, common logic cannot resolve this dialectical result, as it does not reflect on the speculative process which constitutes identity, but takes the result of this process, i.e. abstract identity, as an immediate content of consciousness. Common logic misconceives identity as immediate equality with itself and is thus characterized by its “lack of being conscious about the negative motion”¹⁰⁰ which is constitutive for its concepts. As a consequence, identity is not what it is, since it does not match its concept, namely: the exclusion of difference.¹⁰¹ In contrast, speculative logic resolves the dialectics of identity as it explicates the process which constitutes identity, namely its inherent negation of negation (difference). For speculative logic, identity is nothing but the self-referential negation, i.e. the difference from difference, by which identity is constituted. It is exactly the surplus value of LNC over LI that indicates this “contamination” of identity with negativity. The twofold negation in “A is not non-A” at least insinuates the self-referential negation which constitutes identity. Other than LI, LNC not only enunciates “A” but also “non-A” as “the purely-other of A.”¹⁰² But this non-A is just posited to be negated by “is not.” Hence, LNC expresses identity “as negation of negation”¹⁰³ or the result of a mediating process, whereas LI only posits the result of this process as the immediate equality of “A” with itself.

To make this point clearer, an explanatory note to the concept of identity in the *Science of Logic* analyzes tautology as an instantiation of LI: due

⁹⁷ Cf. Manfred Zahn, “Die Idee der formalen und transzendentalen Logik bei Kant, Fichte und Hegel,” *Schelling-Studien. Festgabe für Manfred Schröter zum 85. Geburtstag*, ed. Anton Mirko Kocktanek (Munich/Vienna: Oldenbourg: 1965), 153–191, 165.

⁹⁸ *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 262.

⁹⁹ *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 262.

¹⁰⁰ *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 263.

¹⁰¹ In general: Things which do not match their concept represent a contradiction: on the one hand, they are what they are, on the other hand, they are not what they are (Pippin 2016, 187).

¹⁰² *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 265.

¹⁰³ *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 265.

to its lack of reflection, common thinking does not grasp that there is a contradiction inherent in tautologies, namely a contradiction between the content of the tautology and its form as a sentence. As its essential feature, the tautology asserts a predicate of its subject which is *not different* from the subject (e.g. “A flower is – a flower.”). Psychologically, tautological sentences cause boredom by frustrating the anticipation of their addressees who expect the predicate to determine the subject by a content which is different from the subject.¹⁰⁴ This psychological phenomenon mirrors the contradiction between the intention of a tautology as a sentence (to determine the subject by a different predicate) and its content. A sentence intends the difference between its subject and predicate, but identical sentences negate this intention. From this, Hegel concludes that “identical speech contradicts itself.”¹⁰⁵ With “A is,” the sentence starts to say something different from “A” in a predicate, but the repetition of “A” in the predication annihilates this difference and returns to “A.” For common logic, this dialectics of tautologies is intractable, whereas for speculative thought, tautologies are neither pointless nor contradictory. From a speculative point of view, the tautology implicitly expresses the mediating process of the self-constitution of identity, namely the position and annihilation of difference.

As a first result, Hegel’s distinction between speculative and common logic can be characterized as follows: Speculative logic explicates the self-referential negative movement which establishes identity, whereas common logic just takes the result of this process as immediately given. Common logic thus abstracts from the process by which identity is constituted and therefore it is untrue (not false).¹⁰⁶ For Hegel, one cannot overcome common logic and its devotion to LNC by tossing it away but by reflecting on the process which constitutes common logic’s determinations of thought, i.e. identity, difference, opposition, and contradiction. Whereas for Schlegel common logic cannot be applied to the absolute as it can only be apprehended by contradictory determinations, for Hegel it is common logic’s concept of identity itself which is contradictory. From Hegel’s point of view, Schlegel therefore still takes identity in its immediate givenness and does not overcome common logic. Speculative logic is not a different kind of thinking compared to common logic but is common logic reflected in itself and has thereby become conscious of its own presuppositions. In contrast to Schlegel, Hegel’s higher thinking does not replace common thinking, but explicates its implicit presuppositions.

¹⁰⁴ *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 264.

¹⁰⁵ *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 264.

¹⁰⁶ *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 263.

Despite these differences, for both Hegel and Schlegel, the concept of contradiction is connected to the concept of the absolute or infinity. But Hegel does not consider infinity as a transcendent being which surpasses all possible determination, but, quite the opposite: it is the result of a logical process determining all our logical concepts. To make this point clearer, we can again refer to Hegel's determination of identity. No concept can be infinite or absolute as long as it depends on and is limited by a concept which is exterior to it. Thus, as long as identity is defined as the abstract negation of difference, it is limited by difference and is therefore not infinite. For common logic, it is all too clear that identity excludes difference from itself by distinguishing itself from difference (identity is defined as being opposed to difference).¹⁰⁷ Therefore, difference is external to identity, i.e. identity is determined by and thus depends on a concept which is exterior to it and is therefore finite. But a limited or finite concept cannot be applied to the absolute since it cannot contain infinity. And this is why common logic cannot grasp the absolute or infinity.

But as we have already seen, for speculative logic difference is not only essential to identity but identity is nothing but the difference (d_1) from difference (d_2) as the determined negation of d_2 . But since there is no difference between d_1 and d_2 , for both are nothing but difference d , identity as reflected in itself not only negates d_2 but (since $d_1=d_2$) also d_1 , i.e. it negates both difference as such and its difference from difference. Therefore, identity is identical with the absolute difference, the latter one being nothing but the absolute difference from difference, i.e. not just a difference in some respect but the difference from being different at all. In other words: absolute difference and absolute identity are absolutely identical. Both difference and identity merge into their respective opposite: the position of identity necessarily results in difference and vice versa.

As a result, difference and identity are no longer limited by and dependent on an exterior concept, since they have become identical. The most famous example of this rather abstract structure is of course Kant's antinomies: if one posits the world as temporally infinite, this necessarily results in the finitude of the world. But if one posits the world as temporally finite, this necessarily results in the infinity of the world. "Contradiction" in

¹⁰⁷ Regarding the following thoughts see especially: Dieter Henrich, "Hegels Grundoperation," *Der Idealismus und seine Gegenwart. Festschrift für Werner Marx zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Ute Guzzoni et al. (Hamburg: 1976), 208–230; Henrich, "Formen der Negation in Hegels Logik," *Hegel-Jahrbuch* (1974): 245–256; Stephan Grotz, *Negationen des Absoluten: Meister Eckhart, Cusanus, Hegel* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2009), 258ff.; Schick, *Contradictio Est Regula Veri*, 364ff.

the sense of a thought determination is exactly this antinomic transition of difference into identity and vice versa, in which both identity and difference disappear into their respective opposite.¹⁰⁸ For Hegel, this disappearance is itself a form of unity, namely “the *zero*.”¹⁰⁹ the cancellation or negation of difference and identity. Yet this negation is not an undetermined or abstract negation but the determined negation of a determined negation, namely the negation of identity and difference – more specifically: the negation of the exclusion of their respective opposite.¹¹⁰ As a consequence, contrary to both Schlegel and Kant, a contradiction for Hegel has a determined consequence or a positive result as its solution: a unity in which difference and identity are not opposites per se but two essential moments constituting this unity. This unity, of which both difference and identity are just moments, is identified by Hegel with the thought determination of “ground.” Therefore, as a result of its immanent contradiction, identity did “not only perish (*zu Grunde gegangen*),” but “went back into its ground (*in seinen Grund zurückgegangen*).”¹¹¹ The same holds for all philosophical determinations and notions: from their identity with themselves they merge into their opposite and become contradictory. As a result of this contradiction, they go back into their ground (e.g. actual law is the ground of positive law and natural law, comprising both as its moments, whereas a purely positive law is not law but just coercion by power and a purely natural law is not a law but just an unenforceable optative). The result of a speculative contradiction, therefore, is not EFQ as the negation of the principle of sufficient reason but exactly the very determination of thought which underlies this principle.

3. Hegel’s Critique of Romantic Irony

We have seen that for both Hegel and Schlegel there are contradictions that necessarily occur. For Schlegel, just as for dialetheism, these contradictions are true contradictions. Therefore, dialetheism obviously pursues more a Romantic project and not a Hegelian project. Put differently: Not Hegel but Schlegel is the true precursor of dialetheism. For Schlegel, true contradictions cannot be resolved logically. Instead, they set the poetic imagination free. Thus Schlegel—just like Graham Priest—wants to transcend and go

¹⁰⁸ *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 280.

¹⁰⁹ *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 280.

¹¹⁰ According to Brandom, determinate negation is exclusive negation: “For Hegel, it is this exclusiveness that is the essence of negation.” Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead. Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 179.

¹¹¹ *Science of Logic* 1812/13, GW 11, 282.

beyond the limits of thought whereas Hegel criticizes the Romantics for their rejection of LNC, LSR, and of all logical methodology and their replacement of them with the poetic imagination and romantic irony.¹¹² For Hegel, all contradictions have to be resolved within logical thought. Even more, the contradiction has in itself the logical resources for its solution and sublation in its ground. It is just the result of the reflection of abstract identity and is just an intermediate phase of the reflection of abstract identity into itself resulting in the ground as the absolute and concrete identity reflected into itself. The eventual end of logic for Hegel is not, as for Schlegel, the transgression of logical methodology but the comprehension of logical methodology, which is at the same time the solution of all contradictions in logic. Contrary to Schlegel and dialetheism, Hegel does not dismiss the universal validity of LI and LNC but tries to speculatively reconstruct their true meaning. Hegel does not claim to annihilate common logic but to apprehend and thereby substantiate it. From Hegel's point of view, Schlegel's annihilation of common logic and its substitution by the poetic imagination and irony does not overcome common logic. Rather, it merely sets an excessive subjectivity against objective thinking. Schlegel's ironic I does not resolve contradictions, but his irony keeps them as true contradictions. The unresolved contradiction lets him flee "all that is objective."¹¹³ Schlegel's irony therefore lacks the "desire of *thinking reason*"¹¹⁴ for objective truth. It is nothing but "the subjectivity knowing itself as the highest,"¹¹⁵ since for Schlegel there is no objective reason that subjectivity would have to accept for its proceeding from a contradiction. Quite the contrary, the ingenious subjectivity of the Romantic genius can proceed without having to obey LSR. From the point of view of Hegel's logic, Schlegel's irony thus represents the "*randomness and arbitrariness of subjective sentiment and its opinion.*"¹¹⁶ Schlegel's dialectics "degrades all determination to a futile illusion in the free play of the I's genius."¹¹⁷ Hegel therefore criticizes the affirmation of antinomies in Schlegel's concept of irony. Irony does not resolve the contradiction, but preserves it in thought. According to Hegel, Schlegel

¹¹² Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic. From Being to Infinity* (Purdue University Press, 2006), 31.

¹¹³ *Foreword Hinrichs*, GW 15, 139.

¹¹⁴ *Solger-Review*, GW 16, 99.

¹¹⁵ *Philosophy of Right*, GW 14,1, 132; cf. SW 20, 416.

¹¹⁶ *Foreword Hinrichs*, GW 15, 138.

¹¹⁷ Pöggeler, *Hegels Kritik der Romantik*, 49.

hence falsely claims his concept of irony is related to Socratic irony.¹¹⁸ For Plato and Socrates, irony only concerns the sophistic consciousness, not the idea itself. Thus, it is an attitude which concerns persons and not infinity itself. Whereas for Schlegel contradiction is the ultimate result of logical speculation, Plato's dialectics tries to resolve contradictions. Plato did not take dialectics as the final result of thought or as the proper way of dealing with ideas, but, unlike Schlegel, he dissolved dialectics and subjectivity into the substantiality of the idea.¹¹⁹ On the contrary, Schlegel, the modern "father of irony,"¹²⁰ considered contradiction to be the final result of possible logic. According to Hegel, Plato's concept of irony and Schlegel's irony therefore just share the same name. Contrary to his very own intention, Schlegel does not act any different from Kant, for both are not able to solve the contradiction. Thus, both cannot reconcile the seeming contradiction between logical thought and infinity or the absolute.

Of course, there are good reasons not to share Hegel's evaluation of Schlegel's irony and his acceptance of true contradictions.¹²¹ One might also share Schlegel's assessment of Hegel's dialectics: Schlegel criticizes Hegel for returning "completely into the empty room of absolute thought again."¹²² Like Adorno, Schlegel blames Hegel for not tolerating contradictions but resolving them and dissolving difference into an allegedly absolute identity. For Hegel, Schlegel's criticism is as follows: "the essence of spirit in general consists in the annihilation of an opposite."¹²³ Therefore, one might also hold that not the solution but the toleration of contradictions is the highest attainment of human thinking. Similar to Novalis, Schlegel, and Priest, one could hold that absolute truth or infinity can only be thought in a contradictory manner.¹²⁴ But, as we have underscored, this is neither an anticipation nor a continuation of Hegel's speculative logic but rather a counter project to it.

¹¹⁸ Contrary to Hegel, Behler sees in Socratic irony and Schlegel's irony two different manifestations of the same frame of mind: an ancient one and a modern one. Cf. Ernst Behler, *Studien zur Romantik und zur idealistischen Philosophie* (Paderborn et al.: Schöningh, 1988), 14.

¹¹⁹ *Philosophy of Right*, GW14,1, 132.

¹²⁰ *Solger-Review*, GW 16, 98.

¹²¹ Bubner, *The Innovations of Idealism*, 213f.

¹²² *Philosophy of Life*, KFSa 10, 16.

¹²³ *Philosophy of Life*, KFSa 10, 93. Cf. J. Zovko, "Hegels Kritik der Schlegelschen Ironie," *Hegel-Jahrbuch* (2007): 148–154, 149f.

¹²⁴ Arndt, "Widerstreit und Widerspruch," 111.

4. Conclusion

We have seen that Graham Priest cannot claim Hegel as a precursor of dialetheism since for Hegel there can be no true contradictions. Contradictions might be correct but they can never be true, since a contradictory state of affairs is unstable and has to make way for a state of affairs in which the contradiction is dissolved.¹²⁵ Hegel therefore does not reject, but rather radicalizes LNC.¹²⁶ For Hegel criticizes the metaphysical assumptions underpinning traditional logic: identity is not just a quality of real beings, but “a requirement of thought.”¹²⁷ Being that is thought is not immediately identical to itself, but only as a result of mediation, the movement of reflection.¹²⁸

Nevertheless, we have maintained that dialetheism is not without forerunners in Classical German Philosophy. These forerunners are the early Romantics, especially Friedrich Schlegel. They do not anticipate Hegel but develop a highly original idea of true contradictions and a way of dealing with them: by evoking contradictions, we transcend the limits of logical thought and give way to a higher form of intellectual activity, namely, the poetic imagination. Ernst Behler therefore correctly distinguishes Schlegel’s “changing stream” “of thinking and counter-thinking”¹²⁹ as “a ‘floating’ without reason and soil”, and Hegel’s dialectics as a teleological process.¹³⁰ Whereas Hegel’s philosophy tries to find reason and order within the apparent chaos of human nature, for Schlegel, the beginning of all poetry is to cancel the laws of reason and logical thinking and to restore “the beautiful confusion of phantasy, the original chaos of human nature.”¹³¹ But this does not mean that Friedrich Schlegel rejects philosophy and logic in favor of an irrational subjectivity, but grounds the power and freedom of the poetic imagination in higher speculation, namely, in the dissolution of LNC. He therefore presents not only a literary or poetic but also a philosophically

¹²⁵ Anton Friedrich Koch, *Die Evolution des logischen Raumes: Aufsätze zu Hegels Nichtstandard-Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 5.

¹²⁶ Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, 179.

¹²⁷ Longuenesse, *Hegel’s Critique of Metaphysics*, 44.

¹²⁸ Longuenesse, *Hegel’s Critique of Metaphysics*, 45.

¹²⁹ *Philosophy of Language and the Word*, KFSa 10, 353.

¹³⁰ Behler, *Ironie und literarische Moderne*, 93.

¹³¹ *Conversation on Poetry*, KFSa 2, 319.

relevant alternative to Hegel's speculative logic,¹³² thereby anticipating a number of recent trends in contemporary logic.¹³³

¹³² For the relation of philosophy and art in Schlegel and also Novalis see especially: David W. Wood, "From 'Fichticizing' to 'Romanticizing'. Fichte and Novalis on the Activities of Philosophy and Art," *Fichte Studien* 41 (2014): 247–278.

¹³³ I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their feedback which helped improve this paper, and the editorial team of *Symphilosophie*.