The Imperfection of Hegelian Ontology

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Abstract

At the core of Hegelian ontology are pure nothing and pure being, as well as the instant becoming between them, which were established through the quest for the beginning of philosophy in his famous book Science of Logic. However, for the past two centuries, that process of ontological construction by Hegel was not carefully examined by scholars all over the world. By delving into some details of Hegel’s discourse in his Science of Logic, this paper would identify one critical logical defect in the process of that construction, which would determine that the Hegelian logic would not be a rigorously self-consistent logic system without presupposition as Hegel claimed.

Keywords: Hegel, logic, ontology, being, nothing, beginning

Introduction

Hegel’s philosophy, especially his famous dialectical logic and phenomenological theory, has had a tremendous impact on the development of Western mainstream philosophy over the past two centuries. His famous Science of Logic has gained a wide repute for its logical rigorosity in its discourse, especially in its so-called ontological construction. At least, Hegel himself not only made a great effort for the logical rigorosity in his endeavor of integrating the traditional metaphysics and logic into a new system he called as logic, but also confidently declared in the Introduction of the Science of Logic (1816a) that the construction of his logic would not depend on any presupposition and all its content would be generated by the work of logic itself. However, people after Hegel would generally treat the Hegelian logic like the traditional metaphysics instead of the traditional logic; besides, most people would usually just discuss or make use of interpretations (or summaries, no matter made by themselves or by some other people) of the content of the Science of Logic, instead of study the process of logical construction of the theory. This has led to such a strange phenomenon: after more than two centuries, with countless respectable bright scholars having studied the text, the logical defect in the construction of the Hegelian ontology, which would be discussed in this writing, could have
been widely ignored. This might have a great deal to do with the style of Hegel’s writing. Hegel’s philosophy is famous for its obscure language, which has been criticized by Schopenhauer (1840, 1044) and some others. This writing would investigate one critical logical defect occurred when Hegel constructed his ontological basis in his masterpiece the Science of Logic for what is later called as dialectic logic. That logical defect also entailed another logical issue when he made the leap from empty nothing to non-empty something in the process. Although there have been many criticisms of Hegel’s dialectical logic in the past two centuries, including Russell (1945) and Popper (1945) and the aforementioned Schopenhauer, no one has pointed out the logical flaw in his ontological construction as will be discussed in this article. In fact, due to the important role of the ontological thought in the development of Hegel’s dialectic logic, many of the problems that people encountered later when using Hegel’s dialectics have been resulting from the logical defect as will be discussed in this writing.

At the core of Hegel’s ontology are the concepts of pure nothing and pure being and the unity of them as well as the becoming between them, which were derived by Hegel through an ostensibly rigorous process for the quest of the beginning of philosophy. Thus, in order to better understand the logic behind the construction of Hegel’s ontology, it is necessary for us to examine his exposition by closely following his original text; however, on the other hand, due to the prolix style of Hegel’s writing, to avoid losing our focus of discussion, sometimes we also need to make some simplifications of his argument by following his original line of logic. For the ease of referencing to the original text during our investigation, it would be very desirable to have an online version of the Science of Logic for us to jump into specific sections of the book. The website www.marxists.org offers a very handy online book of the English version of the Science of Logic translated by A. V. Miller, George Allen & Unwin in 1969. That website is very well organized and the translation is of high quality. Therefore, throughout this writing, I will use the above-mentioned version of the Science of Logic as our reference. All cited text of the Science of Logic would be directly copied from that website without any modification of the wording. Considering that the above-mentioned version of translation clearly labels different sections of the original text, and the above-mentioned website organizes different parts of the Science of Logic into different web pages with their own URL’s, I would provide specific detailed section and URL information to different cited contents in the Endnote of this writing for the benefit of readers.

Our investigation will be divided into the following major parts: the question about the beginning of philosophy, the quest for the beginning of philosophy, the leap from nothing to being, and the completion of the major construction of Hegelian ontology, by following the line of thought of Hegel.

2. The question about the beginning of philosophy

If we want to find the beginning of philosophy as Hegel did, then logically speaking, the first question should be whether there is a single point of beginning for philosophy or not. Hegel never provided any hard logical argument to validate the existence of the beginning of philosophy; instead, he made some indication of that existence with some soft tactic treatment. The first step he took was to convert the issue of the beginning of philosophy to the issue of the beginning of logic as we might see from the following text of the Science of Logic:

§62 (Hegel 1816a) . . . However, the exposition of what alone can be the true method of philosophical science falls within the treatment of logic itself; for the method is the consciousness of the form of the inner self-movement of the content of logic. . . . §90 (Hegel 1816b) . . . If earlier abstract thought was interested in the principle only as content, but in the course of philosophical development has been impelled to pay attention to the other side, to the behaviour of the cognitive process, this implies that the subjective act has also been grasped as an essential moment of objective truth, and this brings with it the need to unite the method with the content, the form with the principle. Thus the principle ought also to be the beginning, and what is the first for thought ought also to be the first in the process of thinking.

Here Hegel first pointed out in §62 that the true method of philosophy must belong to the scope of the logic, and then in §90 pointed out that the method is united with the content, and the form with the principle, which implies that the beginning of philosophy should be the beginning of logic. In the next few paragraphs
Hegel then clearly stated that the beginning of philosophy is actually the beginning of logic:

§ 91 Here we have only to consider how the logical beginning appears; the two sides from which it can be taken have already been named, to wit, either as a mediated result or as a beginning proper, as an immediacy. . . . § 93 The beginning is logical in that it is to be made in the element of thought that is free and for itself, in pure knowing. §94 Logic is pure science, that is, pure knowledge in the entire range of its development. . . . § 98 . . . But if no presupposition is to be made and the beginning itself is taken immediately, then its only determination is that it is to be the beginning of logic, of thought as such . . .

The above approach of Hegel could bring about such a question to the readers: since he was writing a book about logic, why did not he talk about the beginning of logic directly but instead make a detour through the beginning of philosophy first? The answer is a bit complicated. It was not simply because he would like to call his new philosophy as logic, but more importantly because he could actually gain an advantage for his argument by doing this—he could use some relevant historical background to naturally lead the discussion to the topic of the beginning of philosophy as he did in the following paragraphs:

§88 It is only in recent times that thinkers have become aware of the difficulty of finding a beginning in philosophy, and the reason for this difficulty and also the possibility of resolving it has been much discussed . . .

Even though this might look like a small convenience, it might be a deliberate special treatment of Hegel. As a scrupulous thinker, Hegel must know the importance of a logical substantiation of the existence of the beginning of logic (or philosophy) to his quest of that beginning. However, he obviously failed to find one. Therefore, he had to make some technical maneuver at this point to cover this critical part for his construction. The above-mentioned introduction of the topic by using the historical background was the first step of that maneuver, and in §89 we could see the next step of it:

§ 89 The principle of a philosophy does, of course, also express a beginning, but not so much a subjective as an objective one, the beginning of everything. The principle is a particular determinate content — water, the one, nous, idea, substance, monad, etc. Or, if it refers to the nature of cognition and consequently is supposed to be only a criterion rather than an objective determination — thought, intuition, sensation, ego, subjectivity itself. Then here too it is the nature of the content which is the point of interest. The beginning as such, on the other hand, as something subjective in the sense of being a particular, inessential way of introducing the discourse, remains unconsidered, a matter of indifference, and so too the need to find an answer to the question, With what should the beginning be made? remains of no importance in face of the need for a principle in which alone the interest of the matter in hand seems to lie, the interest as to what is the truth, the absolute ground.

In this paragraph, he reiterated the importance of his quest of the beginning of philosophy. First of all, he made an indication that the beginning of philosophy must exist since its principle should have a beginning just like other principles, and then he impressed the readers of the uniqueness of his quest for it was a quest that had been ignored by others. However, he still did not provide any hard logical reason to prove the existence of the beginning point of philosophy. Hegel never provided that kind of proof in the rest of his book either, although he did make effort to review different attempts of searching for the beginning of philosophy. In the following §§95 to §§116, he established the existence of the beginning of philosophy in a seemingly logically-strict way, but all his arguments were in fact based on the implicitly presupposed assumption that there was a single beginning of logic (philosophy). Under that premise he found the beginning. It is a common practice in applied mathematics to first assume the existence of the solution and then find that solution. Even though this common practice is not logically faultless if we scrutinize it by following a strict logic, it is nonetheless a very effective way to reach the correct solution in applied mathematics. However, due to the fact that what Hegel was dealing with here is directly connecting to the foundation of the whole civilization, the logical imperfection of that practically effective technique could indeed become a lethal defect for his ontological construction., which is the unity of pure being and pure nothing. From this we can see a logical loophole in the quest of Hegel for the beginning of logic (philosophy): he did not logically substantiate the existence of the beginning before he started to look for it.
3. The quest for the beginning of philosophy

Now let’s review how Hegel worked out (with the implicit presupposition of the existence of the beginning point) the conclusion that the beginning of philosophy was the unity of pure being and pure nothing. First, continuing with the claim made in §93 that the beginning of philosophy should be in pure knowing, in §96, §97, and §99 he pointed out that pure knowing would only contain a simple immediacy which must then be pure being without any further specification and filling. Accordingly, the beginning of philosophy must be pure being:

§96 Pure knowing as concentrated into this unity has sublated all reference to an other and to mediation; it is without any distinction and as thus distinctionless, ceases itself to be knowledge; what is present is only simple immediacy. §97 Simple immediacy is itself an expression of reflection and contains a reference to its distinction from what is mediated. This simple immediacy, therefore, in its true expression is pure being. Just as pure knowing is to mean knowing as such, quite abstractly, so too pure being is to mean nothing but being in general: being, and nothing else, without any further specification and filling. §99 Thus the beginning must be an absolute, or what is synonymous here, an abstract beginning; and so it may not suppose anything, must not be mediated by anything nor have a ground; rather it is to be itself the ground of the entire science. Consequently, it must be purely and simply an immediacy, or rather merely immediacy itself. Just as it cannot possess any determination relatively to anything else, so too it cannot contain within itself any determination, any content; for any such would be a distinguishing and an inter-relationship of distinct moments, and consequently a mediation. The beginning therefore is pure being.

Then in §101 to §116, Hegel further discussed what is the beginning of logic (philosophy). It is worth noting that, unlike his soft treatment of the validity of the existence of the beginning, the argument carried out for identifying the beginning is logically rigorous. Because of the lengthy nature of his discussion, instead of referring the original text, I would like to simplify it into following a few points:

First of all, in §101 to §102 Hegel laid down the metaphysical basis for this part of his reasoning by introducing the idea that the advance is a retreat into the ground. In accordance with this idea, from §102 to §104, Hegel discussed how to proceed backward from an arbitrary point of immediacy to find its cause, and then to further find the causes for that cause, until it is pushed back to the most primary beginning. The beginning reached in this way must be both immediate and mediated. It must be an immediacy if it could be used to explain something else, and it must also be a mediated since it is found by reversal reasoning. It is emphasized in §105 and §106 that the beginning that is found in this way would be the true beginning instead of provisional, or problematical and hypothetical.

Secondly, in the subsequent §107, §109, and §113 to §116 Hegel repeatedly used the logic of proof by contradiction, which could be summarized as follows:

The beginning of philosophy must be the empty nothing. Assuming that the beginning of philosophy is a non-empty ABC (Here ABC is not referring to a name, but referring to the content or the method or the meaning), then we can ask for the interpretation of ABC, which means that it would not be the true primary logical beginning. Thus the beginning of philosophy must be the empty nothing without any meaning.

Of course, the application of the above-mentioned proof by contradiction logic also requires a prerequisite: when we make a logical interpretation of anything we should not use a tautological or circular argument like A=A. Hegel has already completed this logical preparation in §27 (1816c) of the preface of the Science of Logic.

In §108, Hegel continued with his previous argument that the beginning of philosophy must be in pure knowing. The logic of the following passage in that section is worth noting:

§108 For here at the start, where the subject matter itself is not yet to hand, philosophy is an empty word or some assumed, unjustified conception. Pure knowing yields only this negative determination, that the beginning is to be abstract. If pure being is taken as the content of pure knowing, then the latter must stand back from its content, allowing it to have free play and not determining it further.
Here, Hegel emphasized that when we start talking about philosophy it is simply an empty noun and our knowing is also without any content; if we insist on specifying the content of pure knowing then it would the pure being. However, personally I would consider the phenomenological argument of Hegel in that passage is logically questionable. This is because at the moment when we use the noun “philosophy” instead of “plane” or any other noun, we have already attached the specific meaning to that noun in our mind. Any attempt of separating the meaning from the word in our mind would violate the psychological principle of language.

4. The leap from nothing to being

§110 to §112 are of critical importance to the whole ontological construction in the Science of Logic. It should be said that Hegel’s argument in these three sections is not as logically strict as his argument for the emptiness of the beginning of philosophy. Let’s first look at §110:

§110 As yet there is nothing and there is to become something the beginning is not pure nothing, but a nothing from which something is to proceed; therefore being, too, is already contained in the beginning. The beginning therefore contains both, being and nothing, is the unity of being and nothing; or is non-being which is at the same time being, and being which is at the same time non-being.

Here we need to note that before and after these three sections Hegel was always claiming that the beginning of philosophy is both pure being and pure nothing; but now when encountered with the critical challenge of how to leap from the empty beginning to any non-empty being, he started to talk about being and nothing instead of pure being and pure nothing and even made a statement of “beginning is not pure nothing”. In the following §111 he went on to say:

§111 Further, in the beginning, being and nothing are present as distinguished from each other; . . .

This is in plain logical contradiction to what he said at other places that the beginning of philosophy is the pure being or pure nothing without any meaning and content. As a matter of fact, in §134 he even said, “Pure Being and pure nothing are, therefore, the same,” which obviously does not agree with his statements in §110-§112. We could be assured that the selection of wording in those three sections should not be random and Hegel must be aware of the contradiction as we notice here. Nonetheless, apparently he did not make effort to solve that contradiction in a logically rigorous way, but rather managed to smooth the difficulty by some tactic word playing, such as changing pure being and pure nothing to being and nothing particularly in these three sections and then adding back the adjective pure after these three sections.

From the above maneuver we could clearly sense the mental struggle Hegel was experiencing when he was facing the challenge of logically resolving the leap from the empty nothing to non-empty being. The key logical basis for his argument in §110-§112 can be summarized as that since the beginning is where empty nothing turns into non-empty being, it should contain some factor that is related to the transition from empty nothing to something. In addition to what he said in §110, for example, in §111 he said the following:

§111 . . . for the beginning points to something else — it is a non-being which carries a reference to being as to an other; that which begins, as yet is not, it is only on the way to being.

Then in §112, he concluded his argument in §110 and §111 as:

§112 The analysis of the beginning would thus yield the notion of the unity of being and nothing — or, in a more reflected form, the unity of differentiatedness and non-differentiatedness, or the identity of identity and non-identity. This concept could be regarded as the first, purest, that is, most abstract definition of the absolute — as it would in fact be if we were at all concerned with the form of definitions and with the name of the absolute. In this sense, that abstract concept would be the first definition of this absolute and all further determinations and developments only more specific and richer definitions of it . . .

The argument of Hegel in the above-reviewed three sections §110 to §112 might apparently sound logical but indeed is just a description of his own particular view or his own metaphysical reflection of the reality. The philosophical community after Hegel not only widely accepted the argument Hegel made in above reviewed §110 to §112 but also considered it as a major establishment at the core of the so-called Hegelian dialectic
logic. The main reason for people to accept his argument in §110 to §112 has been that it conforms to the reality of nature and society. But the problem is that Hegel’s argument in §110 to §112 is logically defective and could only be viewed at best as an act of expediency due to the need of constructing his theory. If he would have stuck to the logical strictness in his reasoning, then once he encountered the difficulty of leaping from the empty nothing to something non-empty, he should have realized that there must be some loophole in his logical premise and the whole process should be overturned. As I mentioned earlier that Hegel never substantiated the existence of the beginning of philosophy before his quest for that beginning, which is a critical defect of his ontological construction for the Science of Logic.

But if we conclude that the above-reviewed ontological construction of Hegel is logically defective, how should we explain why people after Hegel would widely consider his assertion (i.e. as a beginning the empty nothing would contain the seed of future development) as a correct reflection of natural and social reality?

First of all, the use of an assertion “an empty starting point could contain the seed of non-empty being”, or something similar, is not a wrong theoretical practice in general because that kind of assertion is a reasonable reflection of some natural or social processes. For example, from the phenomenon of a mother conceiving the fertilized ovum and then giving birth to her baby we can reasonably abstract out an assertion that an empty starting point could contain the seed of non-empty being. We might apply this assertion to many natural or social phenomena that are alike. However, the relevant reality correspondent to that abstracted assertion must be a seemingly empty starting point, not an absolutely empty starting point. If we would attempt to make an abstraction out of the relevant life experience that an absolutely empty starting point could contain the seed of non-empty being, and then we would be indeed artificially creating, by imagination, a logical proposition to be used in strict logical reasoning as Hegel did in his ontological construction.

In fact, in the above-reviewed §110 to §112 Hegel effectively introduced an artificial proposition that the beginning of philosophy is such kind of nothing that could develop into non-empty being since it contains the seed of non-empty, and used that proposition as a presupposed logical condition for his new logic. That proposition is not the outcome of the development of the logical exposition itself as it was supposed to be, but an artificially introduced hypothetical presupposition for the construction of Hegel’s new logic. Let’s take a look at how Hegel himself, in the introduction of the Science of Logic (1816a), spoke of the importance of not using any additional presuppositions for his logic:

§33 In no science is the need to begin with the subject matter itself, without preliminary reflections, felt more strongly than in the science of logic. In every other science the subject matter and the scientific method are distinguished from each other; also the content does not make an absolute beginning but is dependent on other concepts and is connected on all sides with other material. These other sciences are, therefore, permitted to speak of their ground and its context and also of their method, only as premises taken for granted which, as forms of definitions and such-like presupposed as familiar and accepted, are to be applied straight-way, and also to employ the usual kind of reasoning for the establishment of their general concepts and fundamental determinations. §34 Logic on the contrary, cannot presuppose any of these forms of reflection and laws of thinking, for these constitute part of its own content and have first to be established within the science. But not only the account of scientific method, but even the Notion itself of the science as such belongs to its content, and in fact constitutes its final result; what logic is cannot be stated beforehand, rather does this knowledge of what it is first emerge as the final outcome and consummation of the whole exposition. Similarly, it is essentially within the science that the subject matter of logic, namely, thinking or more specifically comprehensive thinking is considered; the Notion of logic has its genesis in the course of exposition and cannot therefore be premised. Consequently, what is premised in this Introduction is not intended, as it were, to establish the Notion of Logic or to justify its method scientifically in advance, but rather by the aid of some reasoned and historical explanations and reflections to make more accessible to ordinary thinking the point of view from which this science is to be considered.

What Hegel told us in above two paragraphs is that, since logic is used to explain everything including logic itself, the study of logic cannot be premised by any presupposition as is normally done with other sciences. It has to be worked out by the movement of logic itself in the course of exposition of the idea.
If we allow an assertion abstracted directly from some life experiences such as a mother conceiving the fertilized ovum and then giving birth to her baby to be used as a presupposition in the study of logic, then it would be in contradiction to what Hegel said in §34 of the Introduction of the Science of Logic since that presupposition would not be an outcome of purely logical operation itself.

Secondly and more seriously, the artificially introduced presupposition in Hegel’s ontological construction is obviously in logical conflict with the conclusion that the beginning of philosophy is both pure nothing and pure being, which he made in other places of that book. The root cause of that conflict is that Hegel actually failed at the outset of his journey to do what he claimed in §34 of the Introduction since all his work was built on top of an unsubstantiated implicit hypothesis of the existence of the beginning of philosophy. It can be sensed that Hegel experienced painful inner struggle with how to deal with the need of leaping from empty nothing to non-empty something for his ontological construction, but obviously he did not realize that the logical proposition introduced as the outcome of his struggle was not the result of the movement of logic itself, but an artificial add-on. We can sense his struggle from his use of various different arguments, at different places of the Science of Logic, that cannot be considered as the logical basis to support his theory of the leap from the empty beginning to non-empty being; we can see his unawareness of the artificial nature of the logic he used in §110-§112 for he did not go back to modify §33-§34 in the Introduction.

On the other hand, it is also necessary for us to notice the importance of introducing the above-mentioned artificially abstracted logical proposition for the construction of the rest of the Science of Logic: that additional logic enabled him to realize the leap from nothing to something which could not be achieved by the pure self-movement of logic itself. He would not have been able to complete his ontological construction without that leap, and thus he would not have been able to work out his new logic by integrating the traditional metaphysics and traditional logic into the same framework.

Thus, the above discussion tells that a key prerequisite for uniting the traditional metaphysics and traditional logic into the Hegelian dialectic logic is the introduction of an artificial logical proposition. That could explain why the seemingly logically-rigorous dialectical logic system of Hegel could sometimes bring forth some conclusions that are not very logically sound in practices.

5. The completion of the major construction of Hegelian ontology

After his critical work in §110 to §112, as mentioned earlier, Hegel returned to the use of strict logic in §113 to §116 for his claim that the beginning of philosophy must be empty nothing. In this way, his conclusion in §121 and §122 about the empty beginning of philosophy would look much more natural than being made right after the discussion in §110 to §112. §117 to §120 were spent for his refute against some incorrect views of others, which would not be discussed here since what was refuted are not what we are facing today.

It would be beneficial for our discussion to take a further look into the Chapter 1 Being (1816d) of Volume One, Book One, Section One, where Hegel made further elaboration on pure being, pure nothing, and the becoming between them. In the section A (§132) he said:

§132 Being, pure being, without any further determination. In its indeterminate immediacy it is equal only to itself... Being, the indeterminate immediate, is in fact nothing, and neither more nor less than nothing.

And in section B (§133) he said:

§133 Nothing, pure nothing: it is simply equality with itself, complete emptiness, absence of all determination and content — undifferentiatedness in itself... Nothing is, therefore, the same determination, or rather absence of determination, and thus altogether the same as, pure being.

Then in section C (§134) he said:

§134 Pure being and pure nothing are, therefore, the same What is the truth is neither being nor nothing, but that being — does not pass over but has passed over — into nothing, and nothing into being. But it is equally true that they are not undistinguished from each other, that, on the contrary, they are not the
same, that they are absolutely distinct, and yet that they are unseparated and inseparable and that each immediately vanishes in its opposite. Their truth is therefore, this movement of the immediate vanishing of the one into the other: becoming, a movement in which both are distinguished, but by a difference which has equally immediately resolved itself.

Up to this point Hegel actually completed the initial construction of the key artificial logical element in his so-called dialectical logic, and then he further explained the above construction in some subsequent Remarks (1816e). In §136 he also used the ancient Greek Heraclitus’s philosophy to support his own ontological view about becoming:

§136 Against that simple and one-sided abstraction the deep-thinking Heraclitus brought forward the higher, total concept of becoming and said: being as little is, as nothing is, or, all flows, which means, all is a becoming. In §164 he first elucidated why the beginning of philosophy should be nothing by making a semantic play:

§164 . . . of course the being which is made the beginning of the science is nothing, for abstraction can be made from everything, and if abstraction is made from everything then nothing is left over. . .

And then he mentioned ancient Chinese philosophy as another example to support his own theory:

§164 . . . that now the beginning should be made with nothing (as in Chinese philosophy), need not cause us to lift a finger, for before we could do so this nothing would no less have converted itself into being. . .

6. Concluding remarks

While Hegel’s quest of the beginning of philosophy and, as the final outcome of that quest, the theory of pure being, pure nothing, and the becoming between them has been considered as the logical preparation for the rest of the Science of Logic, he did not work out any result simply by starting from that beginning in a way that people would normally do with starting points of any logical reasoning. Besides, although the theory of becoming is of fundamental importance to the Hegelian dialectic logic and can be seen all through the Science of Logic, people after Hegel could only use that theory as a general idea, and no one could truly treat it as a beginning of any logical reasoning. It could only be interpreted as a basic condition of natural or social reality, or as a general doctrine.

Therefore, as a theory that was originally meant to be the starting point of logic, the Hegelian ontology could only be treated as a general knowledge in the end. On the other hand, if someone wants to propose a metaphysical theory about pure being, pure nothing, and the becoming between them, there is no need for him to take the pain of a lengthy discourse with seemingly rigorous logic as Hegel did at all. He could simply make a statement that everything starts with being and being comes from nothing as Lao Tzu said metaphysically based on life experience around 2500 years ago; or he could express his ontological view about being and nothing in the form of poetry as Parmenides and Heraclitus did; or he might even simply glue what Plato and Parmenides said about being and nothing together with what Heraclitus said about becoming and then create a new ontological theory about pure being, pure nothing, and becoming, and then use it for other purposes such as to create a dialectic logic as Hegel did. The text for presenting that kind of new theory would be much easier for readers to comprehend than the lengthy discourse of Hegel in the Science of Logic. There is no need to spend that much energy and time as Hegel spent for his ontological construction at all.

By examining some details of the famous Science of Logic we have identified the logical imperfections in the ontological construction of Hegel for his dialectic logic. The most critical defect in that construction is the lack of substantiation of the existence of the beginning of philosophy. In §102 of the Science of Logic Hegel introduced his idea of finding the beginning of philosophy by making the statement “the advance is a retreat into the ground”. However, in chapter 41 of Tao Te Ching, Lao Tzu also made a similar statement. But that statement alone would not lead to the conclusion that there is a single point of beginning for philosophy. As a matter of fact, Lao Tzu also said that the endless discovering of one secret after another would be the only
approach of learning. Therefore, according to the theory of Lao Tzu, even though the advance is a retreat into the ground, it would not help us to find the logical beginning of knowing or reasoning.

Nonetheless, even if the beginning of philosophy that Hegel was searching for does not exist, it would not entail a complete denial of the value of Hegelian ontology and the value of the correspondent dialectic logic. In that case, what we could conclude is that the Hegelian ontological theory, and correspondently its dialectic logic, is not a logic system for everything as Hegel claimed, but just a philosophical system that would be proper only for a subset of all being. As a matter of fact, the non-logical artificial treatment in §110-§112 determines that the so-called Hegelian logic is not a pure logic system as Hegel claimed but only a hybrid of metaphysics and logic. Therefore, the work of this writing could help to identify the proper domain that could be covered by Hegelian ontology and the relevant dialectic logic.

References


Endnote
