

# A DIALETHEIST READING OF HEGEL'S DIALECTIC: BETWEEN RICHTIGKEIT AND WAHRHEIT

by Michela Bordignon\*

**Abstract.** *In Hegel's Foundation Free Metaphysics, Moss ascribes to Hegel some sort of dialetheic conception of truth. According to this reading, every determination of Hegel's logic has a contradictory structure in so far as it is, at the same time, true and false, or, as Moss claims, cancelled and preserved. I critically analyse this reading, first of all, by focusing on some differences between Priest's and Hegel's notion of truth: in Hegel's dialectic truth is not the property of propositions, but of logical determination, and it cannot be accounted for as a relation of satisfaction of a given criteria external to truth bearers. Secondly, I explain that, even considering these differences, there is a sense in which Moss is right: each determination can be said to be true and false in so far as each determination is richtig and unrichtig. Thirdly, I show that Moss's reading is not sufficient to shed light on Hegel's insight of the truth (Wahrheit) of the contradictory structure of logical determinations.*

**Keywords.** *Dialetheism; Hegel; Contradiction; Truth; Negation*

In this text I will discuss a specific point of Moss's *Hegel's Foundation Free Metaphysics*. In the first part of the text, I will recall some points I believe to be of fundamental importance for introducing the problem I discuss in the second part, namely the attribution of some sort of dialetheic conception of truth to Hegel. According to this reading, every determination of Hegel's logic has a contradictory structure in so far as it is, at the same time, true and false, or, as Moss claims, cancelled and preserved. In the second part, I first mention some general differences between Priest's and Hegel's notion of truth: in Hegel's account, dialectic truth is not the property of propositions and it cannot be accounted for as a relation of satisfaction of a given criteria external to the truth bearers, which

\* Universidade Federal do ABC

This study was financed, in part, by the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP), Brazil. Process Number 2025/13687-1.

are the logical determinations themselves. Secondly, I explain that, even considering these differences, there is a sense in which Moss is right: each determination is true and false in so far as each determination is *richtig* and *unrichtig*. Thirdly, I will show that even if Moss's reading accounts for the *Richtigkeit* and *Unrichtigkeit* of logical determinations, it is not sufficient to shed light on Hegel's insight of the truth (*Wahrheit*) of the contradictory structure of logical determinations. Saying that a contradiction is true, in Hegel's logic, is not equivalent to say, as in the dialethic account endorsed by Moss, that it is true and false. In Hegel the negation of a determination is not equivalent to its falsehood. We need a more sophisticated account of the relation of truth and negation in order to explain what is going on in Hegel's logic: negation is not equivalent to the cancellation of a logical determination, or to what we could think of as its falsehood. Rather, this negation is implied by its own truth.

Moss presents a dialethic reading to Hegel's dialectic in order to take on the main challenge of the book, which is the demonstration of the existence and knowability of the absolute. Moss approaches this problem on the basis of Hegel's dialectic of the concept and, more specifically, on the basis of the dialectic of universality, particularity and singularity. At the same time, the very structure of this dialectic and the way it casts doubt on the absolute validity of the principle of non-contradiction (PNC) leads Moss to enter in the debate on the notion of contradiction in the contemporary philosophy of logic. And that is why he makes an original use of some notions of Priest's dialetheism, that is the philosophical thesis according to which some contradictions are true. According to Moss, some sort of dialetheism is needed in order to prove the main thesis of the book, that is the existence and the knowability of the absolute. According to the author, in order to prove that the absolute exists and can be known, one needs to question the PNC and assume a dialethic approach to the absolute. The dialetheism that is needed in order to think of the existence and conceivability of the absolute is what Moss calls absolute dialetheism.

More specifically, Moss distinguishes two kinds of absolute dialetheism: mystical and rationalist dialetheism. The first thesis claims that the absolute exists, but it cannot be known through concepts. The second thesis claims that the absolute exists and that it can be known through concepts. This is possible in so far as one denies the PNC as the main law of conceptual determinism and is

ready to open the logical and ontological space to think of the contradictory, and thus dialethic, nature of the absolute.

The first part of the book is dedicated to the analysis of the problems and limitations of the approaches to the notion of the absolute that are dependent on the assumption of PNC. The assumption of the absolute validity of this principle entails the conception of an absolute that is built on the separation of universality and particularity. This separation implies the denial of self-predication and existential implication of universality. Therefore, this separation ends up in a series of problems or, better said, a series of paradoxes that prevent from accounting for the existence and knowability of the absolute. These problems are the missing difference, absolute empiricism, onto-theology, and the third man regress. The first seven chapters of the book are dedicated to the analysis of these problems and how they find themselves sedimented in a series of conceptions of the absolute of various protagonists of the history of Western philosophy.

In order to avoid the disappearance of the absolute from our ontological and epistemological perspective, and then in order to maintain the specificity of philosophical thought and discourse with respect to particular sciences, we only have one choice: undermining the presupposition giving rise to a finite conception of the absolute. Moss points out that

Given that the PNC is the ultimate source of the relativity of truth, the only way the Absolute can be and can be known is by adopting *Absolute Dialetheism*. Most simply, this means that the Absolute can only be if it is contradictory. *If the Absolute exists it is a true contradiction. If there are no true contradictions, then the Absolute cannot be.* Likewise, if the Absolute is known, then there are true contradictions. *Were there no true contradictions, then the Absolute could not be known*<sup>1</sup>.

In the second part of the book, Moss accounts for the existence and knowability of the absolute by making its self-contradictory structure explicit. This approach is manifestly Hegelian: he draws inspiration from the dialectic of the concept and, more specifically, from the dialectic of concrete universality.

<sup>1</sup> G.S. Moss, *Hegel's Foundation Free Metaphysics: The Logic of Singularity*, New York-London, Routledge, 2020, p. 241.

Moss argues that the immediate and abstract conception of universality is inherently self-contradictory. This implies the impossibility to attribute any sort of autonomous existence to it. This conception of universality gains a subsistence in so far as it is unfolded according to the structure of the absolute, which is intrinsically dialetheic. The finite conception of universality is characterised by the firm distinction of universality and singularity, which is based on the PNC. The true conception of the absolute questions this distinction. Hence, the absolute validity of the PNC is also undermined and this opens the space for one to think of universality as a self-particularizing universality, namely a self-instantiating universality. By having this power of existential implication, universality is necessarily connected with its own actualization, that is to say, it is necessarily connected with its concrete existence. This connection consists of self-referential predication. These logical dynamics are involved in the development of the whole *Science of Logic*, but they are transparently unfolded in the third part of Hegel's logical system, which is the logic of the concept:

Hegel's logic of the concept, which follows the logic of the question 'what is the concept?' recognizes that the concept must be self-predicative, existentially implicative (or self-particularizing), true in virtue of itself (absolutely true), simultaneously synthetic as well as analytic, infinite (not limited by an external principle), and contradictory<sup>2</sup>.

Therefore, the negation of the absolute validity of the PNC is a necessary condition to account for the conceivability of the absolute. It is in the logic of the concept that Hegel presents a self-predicative conception of universality, that is to say, a conception of universality that has an existential implication and is able to particularize itself. Hegel's universality is a universality that gives rise to its own particularization. Of course, Hegel opens up a logical and ontological space to think of this kind of universality because he is ready to cast doubt into the absolute validity of the principle of non-contradiction.

Indeed, Hegel's concept of absolute is such that, insofar as it is universal, it is also necessarily particular, that is, Hegel conceives of a concept of absolute that is self-contradictory. And that is how

<sup>2</sup> Ivi, p. 263.

Moss leads us to rethink the Hegelian thesis of the truth of contradiction:

Since the identity of identity and difference is a contradiction, 'A=A' certainly does not reflect the *form* of the first principle. Rather – if one insists on formalizing the insight – the principle of thought would be that 'everything contradicts itself,' namely always *both A and not-A*<sup>3</sup>.

In the following page Moss writes:

As Hegel makes explicitly clear, *every concept is contradictory*. Although we have already shown that the concept of absolute difference engenders contradiction, for Hegel contradiction is a category that applies to every concept in the *Logic*. Because each concept of the *Logic* is a concept of *the Absolute*, contradiction applies to every concept<sup>4</sup>.

A few pages later, Moss points out the limits of those interpretations of Hegel's dialectic claiming that Hegel did not intend to deny the validity of the PNC (such as Brandom's interpretation, for example). In order to do this, Moss shows how the *Aufhebung* of the contradictory nature of a logical determination implies both the cancelling and the preservation of it. The determination is both true and false.

Moss mentions the example of the passage from the contradiction of becoming to determinate being: in determinate being the contradiction of becoming is both cancelled and preserved. Following this line of thought, he claims that the contradictory structure of the determinations of Hegel's logic is, at the same time, true and false:

Rather than showing that contradictions are not true, it only generates new contradictions. Even though it is the case that Being, nothing, and becoming resolve themselves into a consistent category, the inconsistency nonetheless *remains preserved*. Indeed, 'Being is nothing' must *remain* true, despite the fact that it is *cancelled* in the development of determinate being. For this reason, *it is true and false*. This is the meaning of dialectics as '*cancelling and preserving*.' Cancelled contradictions are *also* preserved. Since these developments do not happen in time, the truth and falsehood

<sup>3</sup> Ivi, p. 274.

<sup>4</sup> Ivi, p. 275.

of the contradiction – before and after its cancelation, not only preserves the truth of contradiction but *grows* them<sup>5</sup>.

Moss endorses a sort of dialetheist reading of Hegel's logic, since he divides the logical space in two areas – truth and falsehood – and he claims that one and the same determination can be assigned to both of them. Therefore, according to his interpretation, questioning the absolute validity of the PNC means that not all contradictions are false, but that some contradictions are true, and saying that a contradiction is true implies the claim that it is both true and false.

The determination of the Absolute as contradiction is not the final determination of the Absolute – its truth lies in the concept of self-particularization and its various manifestations. But this does not mean that contradiction ever ceases to be true. Rather, showing that it is false (that it is cancelled), shows that *contradiction is both true and false*. Thus, by showing that contradiction is true and false, contradiction is revealed to be contradictory<sup>6</sup>.

The claim that a true contradiction is equivalent to the assignment of a double truth value – truth and falsehood – to what is contradictory makes complete sense in Priest's dialethic account, since he endorses a classical conception of negation, which is interdefinable with falsehood.

$Fa \Leftrightarrow T\neg a$

This defines falsity in terms of truth and negation. A legitimate question, therefore, is what negation is. If we are searching for a definition, I confess I have none to offer. Negation is that sentential function which turns a true sentence into a false one, and vice versa. This is true enough, though as a definition entirely circular<sup>7</sup>.

Can one say the same about the truth of contradiction in Hegel's logic and about his notion of negation and falsehood?

<sup>5</sup> Ivi, p. 279.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>7</sup> G. Priest, *In Contradiction: A Study of the Transconsistent*, The Hague, M. Nijhoff, 2006, p. 64.

My first approach with respect to this problem was different from Moss's<sup>8</sup>. I thought that the association of Hegel's conception of true contradiction with dialetheism was criticisable by saying that Hegel and Priest assume two different notions of negation and, consequently, two different notions of falsehood (and then also of truth). I think I was not completely correct, and that Moss is at least partly right, and I will explain why. But I will also present some clarifications about the necessity to question, at a certain level, the kind of association of Hegel's and Priest's view on contradiction that Moss endorses.

On the one hand, I am still convinced that Hegel and Priest are thinking falsehood in two different ways. This is not easy to justify, since Priest himself points out that «dialetheism [...] does not commit one *per se* to any particular account of truth»<sup>9</sup>, and thus neither it commits one to any specific notion of falsehood. He thus claims that dialetheism can be implemented on the basis of different accounts of what truth and falsehood are. Normally, falsehood is meant to be a propriety assigned to propositions, sentences or beliefs on the basis of a relation of non-correspondence between the content of a proposition and a state of affairs, or the unfulfillment of some coherence criteria or of certain of pragmatic values, etc. (depending on the choice of correspondence, coherence or pragmatist truth theory).

Generally speaking, this does not seem to be related with any sense of falsehood in act in speculative logic. In Hegel's logic, falsehood, as well as truth, is not a property of propositions. Rather, it is something affecting the content of logical determinations. Moreover, it does not express a relation of difference – a non-correspondence or a non-fulfilment – of the logical content of a determination with some sort of external ground, being it a state of affairs, a coherence criterium, or a pragmatist one. Rather, it expresses a relation of difference, or, differently put, of non-correspondence<sup>10</sup>, of the logical

<sup>8</sup> See M. Bordignon, *Hegel: A Dialetheist? Truth and Contradiction in Hegel's Logic*, «Hegel Bulletin», XL (2), 2019, pp. 198-214.

<sup>9</sup> Priest, *In Contradiction: A Study of the Transconsistent*, p. 53.

<sup>10</sup> Except in the rare cases where I refer to the contemporary debate on theories of truth, with respect to the notion of truth and falsehood in Hegel and Priest I will use the term correspondence in a broad sense, which in no way aims to reduce the correspondence relation in question to the classical correspondence theories of truth between the content of a proposition and a state of affairs.

content with itself, that is, with its own concept, which is the complete unfolding of this content<sup>11</sup>. If one can say that a determination is true when it corresponds to the complete unfolding of its content, then a determination is false, or untrue, when it does not correspond, or it partially corresponds, to this complete unfolding<sup>12</sup>.

On the other hand, there is a sense in which Hegel's and Priest's use of the notion of falsehood seems to assume a meaning that is not completely unrelated, and this is precisely the case of true contradictions. In a *dialetheia*, the overlapping of truth and falsehood makes falsehood assume a specific meaning, such that this overlapping is not simply the combination of truth and falsehood, but it represents, in Priest's account, a third truth value. In its dialethic combination

<sup>11</sup> «Thought-determinations are identified as the locus of truth in the *Logic* – not sentences, propositions, or judgments (as in theories of propositional truth)» (M. Alznauer, *Untrue Concepts in Hegel's Logic*, «Journal of the History of Philosophy», LXI (1), 2023, pp. 103-126, p. 110).

<sup>12</sup> Hegel distinguishes his notion of truth (*Wahrheit*) from the standard notion of truth (*Richtigkeit*): «Correctness and truth are very frequently considered to mean the same thing in ordinary life and one accordingly speaks of the truth of some content where it is a matter of mere correctness. Correctness generally affects merely the formal agreement of our representation with its content [*formelle Übereinstimmung unserer Vorstellung mit ihrem Inhalt*]; however, this content may be otherwise constituted. The truth consists, by contrast, in the agreement of the object with itself, i.e. with its concept [*Übereinstimmung des Gegenstandes mit sich selbst, d. h. mit seinem Begriff*]. It may be correct anyway that someone is sick or that someone has stolen something. But such content is not true since a sick body is not in agreement with the concept of life, and so too theft is an action that does not correspond to the concept of human action» (G.W.F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830). Erster Teil. Die Wissenschaft der Logik. Mit den mündlichen Zusätzen*, ed. by E. Moldenhauer and K.M. Michel, in Id., *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, vol. 8, Frankfurt a.M., Suhrkamp, 1970, §172 Z, p. 323; Eng. trans. by K. Brinkmann and D.O. Dahlstrom, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline. Part 1: Science of Logic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, §172 Z, pp. 246-247). Since Hegel defines *Wahrheit* as the agreement of the object with itself, in the case of logical determinations truth is the agreement of the content of the determination with itself, namely the complete dialectical unfolding of this content.

with truth, falsehood seems to express that the content of a proposition is not simply *something different* from what is to be expressed by the proposition itself, but it is *something not sufficient* in order to meet a given criterium of truth, being it a correspondence, coherence, or pragmatist one (whereas truth seem to express the content or the proposition to be necessary in order to meet the same criterium).

The contradictory nature of logical determinations in Hegel's logic is partly related to this dialethic overlapping of truth and falsehood. If we consider one example of true contradiction in Priest's dialetheism and in Hegel's dialectic, the similarity between Priest's notion of dialetheia and Hegel's combination of truth and falsehood comes to light. A paradigmatic example of true contradiction, for Priest, is the structure of the instant of change: «I walk out of the room; for an instant, I am symmetrically poised, on foot in, one foot out, my centre of gravity lying on the vertical plane containing the centre of gravity of the door»<sup>13</sup>. I can ask whether I am in the room or not and I need to answer that 'I am in the room' and 'I am not in the room'. Both propositions, therefore, are true, and since each one is the negation of the other, each proposition is false too. Thus, each proposition is a *dialetheia*, namely, it assumes the third truth value of being both true and false. The fact that both propositions are true expresses that both are *necessary* in order to account for what is going on when I am walking out of the room. The fact that both propositions are also false expresses, in my view, that both are *not sufficient* in order to account for what is going on when I am walking out of the room. The truth of each proposition needs the truth of its negation in order to offer an adequate account of this situation because each one offers part of the truth of the instant of change, but not a complete and adequate account of this situation.

A similar combination of truth and falsehood seems to be in action also in speculative logic. For example, Hegel claims that the finite, insofar as it is finite, is also not finite, or, better said, it is infinite, because it passes over into its other; infinity. On the other hand, in order to be infinite, infinity needs to include finitude as its constitutive moment: between the finite and infinity there is a relation which is of identity and difference. Therefore, one can say that the two contradictory claims 'the finite is finite' and 'the finite is not finite' are both true because each claim is a necessary condition to

<sup>13</sup> G. Priest, *What is so bad about Contradictions?*, «The Journal of Philosophy», XCV (8), pp. 410-426, p. 415.

express what is going on in the unity of finite and infinity. Nevertheless, one also needs to say that ‘the finite is finite’ and ‘the finite is not finite’ are also both false because, separately considered, each claim is not a sufficient condition to express what is going on in the unity of the two opposite determinations. Each proposition expressing the contradictory structure of finitude – predicating respectively the identity and difference of the finite and infinity – is a necessary but not sufficient condition for saying what finite and infinity concretely and truly are. Differently put, each expresses part of the truth, but not the truth of the unity of finite and infinity as a whole.

There seems to be a sense in which Moss’s dialethic reading of Hegel’s contradictory dialectic of logical determination is right, and this is perfectly clear precisely in the example of the contradictory passing over of the finite into infinity:

The claim is made that the finite and the infinite are one unity. This is a false claim that needs correction by its opposite: the two are absolutely different and opposed. This claim is in turn to be corrected to the effect that the two are inseparable; that in the one determination there lies the other by virtue of the claim to unity; and so forth to infinity. [...] The resolution of this contradiction is not the acknowledgment of the *equal correctness*, and of the equal incorrectness, of both claims [*Richtigkeit, und der gleichen Unrichtigkeit beyder Behauptungen*] – this would only be another shape of the still abiding contradiction – but the *ideality* of both, in the sense that in their distinction, as reciprocal negations, they are only moments<sup>14</sup>.

In Hegel’s view, the two claims that ‘the finite and infinite are one and the same’ and ‘the finite and infinite are not one and the same’ express the passing over of the finite into infinity: each one is true. However, each one needs to be corrected by the opposite and is thus false too. This is why Moss would claim that each one is both preserved and cancelled. Nevertheless, this being both true and false, and their being both preserved and cancelled, is not equivalent to the *Aufhebung* process, as Moss seems to argue. Rather, each

<sup>14</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik. Erster Teil. Die objektive Logik. Erster Band. Die Lehre vom Sein (1832)*, ed. by F. Hogemann and W. Jaeschke, in Id., *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21, Hamburg, Meiner, 1985, pp. 138-139; Eng. trans. by G. Di Giovanni, *Science of Logic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 121.

determination is both true and false in so far as each one is both *richtig* and *unrichtig*, correct and incorrect. Each claim is a constitutive part, but only a limited one, of the unity of the finite and infinity, or, differently put, each one is correct because it is a necessary condition for the unfolding of the unity of the two opposite determinations, and it is not correct, because none of them is on its own sufficient for the unfolding of this unity, which is their truth. Each claim expresses part of the true concept of finite and infinity, but no one corresponds to this concept as a whole, which is the truth (*Wahrheit*) of each one of the two determinations.

Can we claim that Hegel has a dialectic conception not only of *Richtigkeit* and *Unrichtigkeit*, but also of *Wahrheit* and *Unwahrheit*, as Moss seems to claim?

My impression is that Moss's dialectic account of Hegel's logic, according to which logical determinations are both true and false, is perfectly able to account for the content of logical determinations being both *unrichtig* and *richtig*, but it is not able to explain the *Aufhebung* of a determination, which instead corresponds to the ideality of both determinations, where each one turns out to be a moment of one single determination process. Only in so far as this process is displayed, the *Wahrheit* of each logical moment of the system, as well as of the system as a whole, is unfolded.

If we consider the example I mentioned, Hegel is clear on this point, when he claims that «the resolution of this contradiction is not the acknowledgment of the *equal correctness*, and of the equal incorrectness, of both claims»<sup>15</sup>. The simple ascription of a double truth value to a logical determination, that is its being correct and not correct, namely *richtig* and *unrichtig*, is what Hegel calls a «shape of the still abiding contradiction»<sup>16</sup>, and the «shape of the still abiding contradiction», for Hegel, is a problem: it is not true, or, not *wahr*. In order to unfold the *Wahrheit* of finitude and infinity, one needs to think of «the resolution of this contradiction»<sup>17</sup>.

The contradictory nature of the determination needs to be resolved, in a sense which is different from the one we meet with the notions of *Richtigkeit* and *Unrichtigkeit*. *Wahrheit* and *Unwahrheit* cannot stand side by side as the two faces of the still abiding

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

contradiction that we meet when we look at the *Richtigkeit* and *Unrichtigkeit* of the identity and difference of the two determinations. The risk of Moss's dialethic reading of Hegel's dialectic, therefore, is that of reducing the relation between *Wahrheit* and *Unwahrheit* and, more specifically, the Hegelian idea of the *Wahrheit* of the contradictory structure of logical determinations, to the relation characterizing *Richtigkeit* and *Unrichtigkeit* of the same determinations. Moreover, the dialectic of logical determinations – their self-negation – needs to be understood on the basis of a necessity to account not only for their contradictory structure, but also for the immanent resolution of this contradiction. This dialectical necessity is not part of Priest's dialethic conception of truth, but it is crucial in Hegel's dialectical conception of the truth of contradictions. In other words: in Hegel's account, each determination is identical to itself, but it is also necessarily led to transcend and negate itself. This is why the self-determining process of speculative thought is dialethic in a sense which does not seem to be reducible to Priest's one.

In order to analyse this point, one needs to account for the immanent negation of logical determinations, for its self-contradictory structure, and for its *Aufhebung*, in a different way than Moss', which simply claims that logical determinations are both true and false. Therefore, on the one hand, the self-contradictory structure of a determination is implied by its immanent negation, which is not interdefinable with the notion of falsehood as it seems to be intended by Moss's account when he claims that logical determinations need to be cancelled: the content of the determination is not simply set aside. On the other hand, through this immanent negation a category is not even simply true in so far as it is merely preserved, because no determination simply remains what it is: it is preserved as moment of the following category, within which it is different from what it is in its immediacy. That is why, notoriously, the notion of *Aufhebung* has not a twofold, but a threefold meaning, which is that of being cancelled and preserved, but also that of being 'lifted up'. My impression is that Moss does not pay sufficient attention to the third meaning of *Aufhebung*, according to which the negation of a determination, its consequent self-contradiction and its *Aufhebung* mean that its content is redetermined in a more concrete, complex and truer way<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> What is cancelled is not the category, but its immediacy: «*Aufhebung* thus does not cast anything aside; as the absolute, immanent 'method' of speculative philosophy, it carries everything along with it. What gets lost is merely the purity of a

Considering our example, the negation of the finite and its consequent contradictory nature is not interdefinable with its falsehood, that is to say, finitude is not cancelled. Rather, and paradoxically, the negation of the finite is equivalent to its truth: finite negates itself and passes over into infinity precisely because of its finitude<sup>19</sup>. Therefore, the finite is certainly preserved, but only in so far as it is 'lifted up' as a moment of infinity, where it excludes its initial immediacy. Finite is redetermined according to a more concrete and truer form: it is neither eliminated, nor preserved as a determination placed against infinity, because it turns out to be a constitutive moment internal to infinity, without being completely identified with it.

In this sense, even if we can affirm that every determination is, dialetheically, correct and incorrect (*richtig* and *unrichtig*), I don't believe we can affirm that every determination is dialectically *aufgehoben* insofar as it is true and false (*wahr* and *falsch*), that is to say, preserved and cancelled. At most, we can affirm that every determination is true and untrue (*wahr* and *unwahr*), where the untruth would be equivalent to its negation, it would be implied by the truth of the determination itself, and it would not simply stand aside its truth, because it would rather be a further development of that very truth, according to «the logical principle that negation is equally positive, or that what is self-contradictory does not resolve itself into a nullity, into abstract nothingness, but essentially only into the negation of its *particular* content»<sup>20</sup>.

category – the idea that a category is purely and simply itself *and nothing more*» (S. Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, West Lafayette (Indiana), Purdue University Press, 2006, p. 302).

<sup>19</sup> Even if I agree with Alznauer that the truth pertains to logical determinations and that it consists of a self-relation internal to their content, I don't think their contradictory structure arises from an inadequate self-relation, as the author points out when he claims that «a concept has the wrong self-relation when its content includes contradictory determinations» (Alznauer, *Untrue concepts in Hegel's logic*, p. 112). This interpretation intends negation as interdefinable with falsehood, which is the point I am questioning when I claim, on the contrary, that the negation of a logical determinations is the result of their truth. The dialectic of the finite is paradigmatic on this point: the inherent self-negation of the finite is the realization of the truth of the finite itself.

<sup>20</sup> Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik. Die Lehre vom Sein (1832)*, pp. 138-139; Eng. trans., p. 33.

This is why I think that the claim that determinations are dialectically true and false opens the space for the risk of reducing the self-contradictory truth (*Wahrheit*) of determinations to their being *correct* and *incorrect* (*richtig* and *unrichtig*). More specifically, I partly agree with Moss because I think that Hegel would buy Priest's dialecticism within the perspective of standard thought. Translated in Hegel's term, his approach to contradiction would include Priest's proposal as the best option available when one is still trapped in the point of view of the Understanding (*Verstand*), whose conception of truth is a simple property of something satisfying a given criterium: the categories are meant to be *richtig* or *unrichtig* when they one-sidedly correspond to their concept.

However, in order to understand the unfolding of the truth of a logical category, as well as of the logical system as a whole, within the perspective of reason (*Vernunft*), a more sophisticated account of truth is needed<sup>21</sup>. This account cannot be a dichotomic one, as the one dividing the logical space into truth and falsehood. The unfolding of the truth of a logical determination is gradual and it depends on the progressive process of self-correspondence of each determination with respect to its whole content, while the truth of the system as a whole depends on the progressive process of self-correspondence of speculative thought with respect to the complete articulation of its logical forms. That is why the negation of any determination does not correspond to its being simply cancelled and preserved, but also and above all leads to a further degree of articulation of its internal content.

Hegel's speculative thought is dialectic also in so far as the contradiction, which is the truth of determinations, as we have seen, needs to be both negated and preserved, or, *aufgehoben*. This preservation and negation, its being both true and untrue is a kind dialectic, but not a standard one. The preservation and negation of a determination manifest its being a constitutive moment of the absolute, but also its not being the whole absolute itself. Each determination corresponds to the absolute, since it is a constitutive moment of the absolute, and thus

<sup>21</sup> «The logic of the understanding engages in the analysis or dissection of what lies in front of it and proceeds by isolating the moments thereby obtained in the attempt to separate truth from falsity, the positive from the negative. To such logic, however, movement and change – the transition that lies between the terms of its dichotomies and blurs its classifications – are in principle unintelligible» (A. Nuzzo, *Approaching Hegel's Logic, Obliquely. Melville, Molière, Beckett*, New York, SUNY, 2018, p. 19).

it is true, but it also does not correspond to the absolute as a whole, and therefore it is also untrue.

Nevertheless, the dialectic character of the preservation and negation of each determination is absolute not because it is relative to the truth of the absolute as a whole. Rather, it is absolute on the basis of the etymological meaning of this word, deriving from the Latin word *absolutus*, which means 'not relative to something else'. The preservation and negation of a determination, its being both true and untrue, is not relative and dependent on the correspondence and non-correspondence with what the absolute is, but it is relative and dependent first of all on the dialectical unfolding of the content of the determinations itself. The correspondence of the content with its own concept implies both its being identical with itself and its own negation. It is the immanent content of logical determinations that leads each one to negate itself and to be *aufgehoben* in another determination. And it is precisely this unfolding that makes explicit, consequently, the specific and concrete relation of the determination with the absolute, as well as with all the other determinations of the system.

This kind of dialecticism, therefore, is absolute, because it is a dialecticism inherent in a thought which is in itself absolute. Speculative thought is absolute because it is not relative to something else, and thus it is not verified or falsified on the basis of some external criteria, being it correspondence, coherence, pragmatic value, and is not verified or falsified even by a given and presupposed conception of the absolute. Speculative thought is absolute because it is a thought that determines itself in an immanent way on the basis of its own internal criteria, that is the unfolding of the concrete and whole content of each determination. Each determination is identical to itself, but it is also necessarily lead to transcend and negate itself. This is why the self-determining process of speculative thought is dialectic in a sense which does not seem to be reducible to Priest's one.

These considerations, and especially the effort to account for the difference between Priest's dialectic conception of truth and Hegel's thesis of the truth of contradiction is what interested me the most in the ideas presented in Moss's book. It is certainly true that, as Moss claims and as I also pointed out, Hegel's notion of true contradiction is in a certain sense dialectic. Nevertheless, it is translatable into Priest's dialecticism only if we are ready to run the risk of losing the chance of shedding light on a point of Hegel's conception of thought which is supposed to be crucial for Moss's philosophical intentions: Hegel's thought is a thought of the absolute, this absolute is contradictory, and its truth is rationally conceivable. However, isn't the notion of true contradiction at the basis of this conception of the absolute underlining some limits of

other notions of true contradiction unwilling to face the challenge of thinking the absolute itself? This cannot occur through a conception of truth as of a two-faced value, looking both towards truth and falsehood. Rather, I think that the thought of the absolute that Moss is looking for is true in a sense which is more similar to what Angelica Nuzzo defines as a 'developmental theory of truth'<sup>22</sup>.

What we need to think of is the development of the truth of the absolute, which is initially given in its purest immediacy and indeterminacy, and which is continually redefined, rethought, and rearticulated in ever new degrees of mediation and knowledge. It is the truth of the absolute because it is the truth of the absolute itself thinking its own truth in so far as it enacts the complete determination of its forms. In this process, contradiction plays, as Moss emphasizes, a fundamental role. But the description of this contradiction in the semantic and dichotomous terms of truth and falsehood means to turn back to the paradigm of the thought of a finite subject whose intent is to distinguish between the two truth values or, at most, to think the dialectic limit between the two. In order to think the absolute, then, we need to think of contradiction, and of the negation that underlies it, in new and revolutionary terms. Contradiction is conceived as a logical and ontological form<sup>23</sup>, which is a way of thinking contradiction that, for many interpreters, should not even be possible to express or think: contradiction, by definition, should belong only to thought and language<sup>24</sup>. But it is precisely this scandalous ontological way of thinking contradiction that is what Hegel wants to bring into play when he provocatively enunciates that «'all things are in themselves contradictory,' in the sense, moreover, that as contrasted with the other this proposition expresses rather the truth and the essence of things»<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> A. Nuzzo, '...As if Truth were a Coin!': Hegel's Developmental Theory of Truth, «Hegel-Studien», XLIV, pp. 131-55.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. M. Bordignon, *Ai limiti della verità. Il problema della contraddizione in Hegel*, Pisa, ETS, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> For example, according to Colletti's critique, there are no real contradictions, contradictory facts, or what are called 'objective contradictions'. Contradiction has an exclusively logical nature and belongs purely to thought. In this sense, claiming that reality is self-contradictory is nonsense (L. Colletti, *Contraddizione dialettica e non contraddizione*, «Verifiche», X (1-3), 1981, pp. 7-62, p. 7).

<sup>25</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik. Erster Band: die objektive Logik (1812/1813), Erster Band: Die Lehre vom Sein (1832)*, ed. by F. Hogemann and W. Jaeschke, in Id., *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 11, Hamburg, Meiner, pp. 286; Eng. trans. by G. Di Giovanni, *Science of Logic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 381.