HEGEL'S ORGANIC NOTION OF SYSTEM. KANT, REINHOLD, AND HEGEL ON THE DEBATE ON PHILOSOPHY AS A SYSTEMATIC SCIENCE[1]

Bruna Picas Prats
The University of Warwick (UK)
Bruna.Picas-I-Prats.1@warwick.ac.uk
University of Barcelona
bpicas@ub.edu

Abstract: *When discussing Hegel's philosophy, it is common to refer to it as Hegel's system of philosophy. Hegel emphasizes that philosophy, to be a science, must be systematic. A significant scholarly debate focuses on the nature of Hegel's system. Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, in his article 'The Question of System: How to Read the Development from Kant to Hegel' (2006), challenges the conventional view that Hegel constructs a system. Instead, Stekeler-Weithofer argues that Hegel builds an encyclopedia, which is an ordered disposition of different realms of knowledge rather than an axiomatic-deductive system. This paper aims to shed light on this issue by arguing that Stekeler-Weithofer's position is partly accurate and partly inaccurate. Stekeler-Weithofer correctly asserts that Hegel does not align with a deductive notion of system, the contents of which are derived from a set of axioms. However, the claim that Hegel does not construct a system is not entirely persuasive. By building on the contributions of Salvi Turró and Karin de Boer, I propose that the foundationalist understanding of a system is an oversimplification of Kant's philosophy made by Reinhold. In opposition to Stekeler-Weithofer's claim, I argue that Hegel does strive to construct a system of philosophy, envisioning it as an organic system.*

Keywords: *System, Architectonic, Organicity, Foundationalism, Hegel, Kant, Reinhold*

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Resumen: *Cuando hablamos sobre la filosofía de Hegel, es habitual referirse a ella como el sistema filosófico de Hegel. El propio Hegel subraya que la filosofía, para ser una ciencia, debe ser sistemática. Un importante debate académico se centra en la cuestión sobre la naturaleza del sistema de Hegel. Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, en su artículo 'The Question of System: How to Read the Development from Kant to Hegel' (2006), desafía la interpretación canónica de que Hegel construye un sistema. En su lugar, Stekeler-Weithofer argumenta que Hegel desarrolla una enciclopedia, esta entendida como una disposición ordenada de diferentes ámbitos de conocimiento en vez de un sistema axiomático-deductivo. Este artículo pretende elucidar esta cuestión argumentando que la postura de Stekeler-Weithofer en parte se sostiene y en parte es incorrecta. Stekeler-Weithofer afirma acertadamente que Hegel no se compromete con una noción deductiva de sistema los contenidos del cual son derivados de un conjunto de axiomas. Sin embargo, la afirmación de que Hegel no construye un sistema no es del todo persuasiva. Basándome en las aportaciones de Salvi Turró y Karin de Boer, defiendo que la concepción fundacionalista de sistema es una simplificación de la filosofía de Kant realizada por parte de Reinhold. Contrariamente a Stekeler-Weithofer, sostengo que Hegel aspira a la construcción de un sistema de la filosofía, entendido como un sistema orgánico.*

Palabras clave: *sistema, arquitectónica, organicidad, fundacionalismo, Hegel, Kant, Reinhold*

Introduction

When we work on Hegel's philosophy, it is common to refer to his philosophy as a system. We usually explain Hegel's philosophy as a system formed by three parts: the Science of Logic, the Philosophy of Nature, and the Philosophy of Spirit. This designation is not arbitrary or unfounded, as Hegel himself repeatedly asserts that "philosophizing without a system can be nothing scientific" (GW, 20, §14). Or, in other words, "it is only as a science or as a system that knowing is actual and can be given an exposition" (GW, 9, p. 17). One of the focal points of Hegel's scholarship is to inquire about the nature of Hegel's system. Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer's article, 'The Question of System: How to Read the Development from Kant to Hegel' (2006) presents an interpretation that challenges the accepted conception that Hegel constructs a system. Controversially, Stekeler-Weithofer argues against this idea. Instead, he writes that Hegel builds an encyclopedia. An encyclopedia, Stekeler-Weithofer claims, "[...] is not a system in the traditional sense of an axiomatic-deductive theory. It is rather an ordered representation of different realms of knowledge and objects, aiming at a kind of conceptual overview" (Stekeler-Weithofer, 2006, p. 83). Hence, for Stekeler-Weithofer, Hegel's work should be interpreted as an encyclopedic endeavour, the aim of which is to present the conceptual disposition of the different fields of knowledge and their objects, rather than a derived whole from a ground or a principle. If Stekeler-Weithofer is right, then this interpretation forces us to raise the question of what Hegel's system is. This paper aims to shed light on this issue.

I will argue that Stekeler-Weithofer's position is partially accurate and partially incorrect. Firstly, Stekeler-Weithofer is correct in asserting that Hegel does not engage in a process of systematization that relies on a deductive approach from a finite set of axioms or a single absolute *Grundsatz*. However, I do not find the claim that Hegel does not construct a system persuasive. To show this, I will demonstrate that Hegel does not adopt the axiomatic-deductive, and thus foundationalist, concept of system, as argued by Stekeler-Weithofer. Building on the contributions of Salvi Turró (1999) and Karin de Boer (2024), I propose that the foundationalist notion of system is the result of Reinhold's oversimplification of Kant's philosophy. Secondly, contrary to Stekeler-Weithofer, I will argue that Hegel *does* indeed strive for a systematic approach to philosophy. I will suggest that Hegel, drawing on Kant's architectonic systematicity, envisions philosophy becoming an *organic* system.

I

§1. Kant's architectonic notion of system

The most explicit meta-systematic[2] reflections within Kant's philosophy are to be found in the third part of the Doctrine of Method, the Architectonic of Pure Reason. According to Kant, this section is dedicated to "the determination of the formal conditions of a complete system of pure reason" (KrV, A708/B736). In other words, it is a doctrine that aims to establish the necessary conditions for conceiving a system of pure reason that is both comprehensive and complete. In the Architectonic of Pure Reason, Kant provides an outline of what metaphysics as a science would be, once it has undergone the critical examination to ensure its possibility. For this reason, at this point of the *Critique*, Kant possesses a very clear notion of what he wants metaphysics to become.

In this section of the Doctrine of Method, reason is expected to behave and provide the conditions for the scientific validity of our cognitions. This entails not conceiving the whole of our cognitions as mere rhapsody, but as a system in which they can support and advance their essential ends (*Cf.* KrV, A832/B860). Hence, "[...] by a system" Kant understands "the unity of the manifold cognitions under one idea" (*Cf. Idem*). In Kant's words, systematic unity is "[...] the rational concept of the form of a whole, insofar as through this the domain of the manifold as well as the position of the parts with respect to each other is determined *a priori*" (*Cf. Idem*). Hence:

> [T]he scientific rational concept thus contains the end and the form of the whole that is congruent with it. The unity of the end, to which parts are related and in the idea which they are also related to each other, allows the absence of any part to be noticed in our knowledge of the rest, and there can be no contingent addition or undetermined magnitude of perfection that does not have its boundaries determined *a priori* (*Cf. Idem*).

Kant argues that for a discipline to be considered a science, it must meet the following criteria: all the parts of a whole of cognitions are to be articulated (*articulatio*) by an idea so that each of its parts holds together in mutual relation and forms a whole according to the principle provided by this inner idea. The notion of '*articulatio*' is contrasted with the term '*coacervatio*', which refers to a whole composed of loosely assembled parts that are externally and arbitrarily linked. In other words, *coacervatio* constitutes a mere collection of disconnected parts. Therefore, the notion of articulation serves as a means of establishing a meaningful connection among the parts of the whole, which are inherently interrelated and essential to both the idea itself and to each other.

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2 By 'meta-systematic' I understand the inquiries the objects of which are the conditions that philosophy - general metaphysics, pure reason or logic - must fulfill to become a systematic science.

Kant argues that "[w]hat we call science" has a "schema [which] contains the outline (*monogramma*) and the division of the whole into members in conformity with the idea, i.e *a priori*" (*Ibid.,* KrV, A833/B861). In the Doctrine of the Elements, Kant defines a schema as the unifying force between the faculties of sensibility and imagination, the function of which is to unify the empirical manifold (*Ibid.*, KrV, A237). Nevertheless, when "[a] schema is not outlined in accordance with an idea, i.e, from the chief end of reason, but rather empirically, in accordance with aims occurring contingently [...]" (*Ibid.*, KrV, A833/B861), it is determined in what Kant calls its technical use; namely, as an aggregation. In contrast, when a system "[...] arises only in consequence of an idea (where reason provides the ends *a priori* and does not await them empirically) grounds architectonic unity" (*Idem*).

Therefore, the transcendental rules that metaphysics must meet to be considered a science are to form an articulated whole whose components are not heaped together (*coacervatio*) (*Cf. Idem*). In Kant's words, "[I]t can, to be sure, grow internally (*per intus susceptionem*) but not externally (*per apositionem*), like an animal body, whose growth does not add a limb but rather makes each limb stronger and fitter for its end without any alteration of proportion" (*Idem*). Hence, a complete system of pure reason considered from its form "[...] cannot arise technically, from the similarity of the manifold of the contingent use of cognition *in concreto* for all sorts of arbitrary external ends, but arises architectonically, for the sake of its affinity and its derivation from a single and supreme inner end, which first makes possible the whole" (*Idem*).

With that, the relationship among the parts that constitute a scientific unity is established by an idea that is executed *a priori*, necessarily, and internally. Furthermore instead of Consequently, the relation of articulation in Kant's meta-systematic philosophy is teleological. The articulative element is a regulative idea that binds all the parts together towards an end (*Zweck*). In the Architectonic of Pure Reason, Kant presents a notion of systematic science that bears resemblance to the growth of an organism, the components of which are gathered as contributing to the development of the whole.

§2. Two senses of 'architectonic'

In the early instead of immediate reception of Kant's philosophy, the architectonic systematic form has often been represented as Turró states in the article 'De la filosofia transcendental a la filosofia com a ciència estricta'(1999), as instead of namely: as,"the image of the grounded building in which the plurality of sufficiently resistant materials or elements supports the weight of the construction" (Turró, 1999, p. 65). However, I do not think that this is the idea of system that Kant had in mind. If we carefully consider the description of the form that metaphysics will acquire as a systematic science, it seems to me that there has been some confusion regarding the term 'architectonic' that I would like to clarify. The

association between a system and the image of a building[3], as we will explore further, is a misinterpretation that Reinhold and Fichte had of Kant's system of pure reason, ultimately leading to a different philosophical paradigm.

Reinhold's critique of Kant's project is rooted in the observation that it lacked a single and absolute principle from which all the other parts of the system could be derived. This, for Reinhold, made Kant's work unsystematic. Consequently, Reinhold introduced the idea that a system is a grounded whole anchored to one absolute principle. This contribution introduces the conception of a system that is related to the metaphor of a building, which can be easily associated with Kant's 'architectonic' systematicity. Hence, I argue that Kant never aligned with this notion of system[4]. In this section, I will delve into the distinction between the two uses or interpretations of the term 'architectonic': on the one hand, 'architectonic' in the 'teleological' sense, as we have just seen; on the other hand, 'architectonic' in the 'architectural' sense[5], namely, as being illustrated by the metaphor of edification. To do so, I present an argument within the *Critique* where Kant himself rejects the 'architectural' notion of system. I will address Reinhold's contribution in detail later.

So, the term 'architectonic' can be understood in two different ways, which can be illustrated by using two different metaphors. First, in the Architectonic of Pure Reason, as Kant explains, 'architectonic' refers to the meta-systematic feature of the *Critique* that primarily designates the 'architectonic' execution of the schema in contrast to its technical use. The 'architectonic' execution of the schema establishes the relationship that determines the type of relation needed to provide the systematic unity of pure reason. The notion of articulation was set in contrast to the concept of aggregation, which formed a unity *per apositionem*, that is, through the addition of external parts, without requiring either a relationship of interiority or order established *a priori*.

The metaphor that best illustrates this idea, as shown above, is the example of an animal body or biological organism. Its growth and development are not dependent on adding parts based on quantitative and arbitrary criteria. Instead, the focus is on improving the functions of its parts, with each contributing to the whole and working within the context of the whole organism. The constitution of every organ and its relation to the organism is dictated by the function it needs to fulfill. Hence, the notion of 'architectonic

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3 This conception is one of the most obvious in the common usage of systematicity, as it closely resembles the notion of system used in mathematics or formal logic. In mathematics, there is an instantiation of a presupposed principle (postulate) or a self-evident principle (axiom) from which the theorems are deductively derived.

4 Kant explicitly rejects the axiomatic-deductive notion of system characteristic of mathematics for metaphysics. This can be seen in A713/B741 in the Doctrine of Method and onwards. For example, Kant states that "Mathematics is thoroughly grounded on definitions, axioms, and demonstrations. I will content myself with showing that none of these elements, in the sense in which the mathematician takes them, can be achieved or imitated by philosophy" (KrV, A727/B755).

5 In pre-Kantian metaphysics, such as Wolff's and Lambert's, we find the same "architectural" notion of system. This notion seems to be lost in Kant's project. However, Reinhold reintroduces it.

unity' as presented in the third section of the Transcendental Doctrine of Method, is not adequately illustrated by the metaphor of the building that has currently been associated with it. Consequently, it can be inferred that the term 'architectonic', as developed in the Architectonic of Pure Reason, carries a distinct meaning from 'architectonic' associated to the field of architecture.

However, it must be acknowledged that Kant employs the second meaning of 'architectonic' in other passages of the *Critique*. This is not limited to the Doctrine of the Elements but also appears at the very beginning of the Doctrine of Method. Let us examine the following excerpt:

> If I regard the sum total of all cognition of pure and speculative reason as an edifice for which we have in ourselves at least the idea, then I can say that in the Transcendental Doctrine of the Elements, we have made an estimate of the building materials and determined for what sort of edifice, with what height and strength, they would suffice. It turned out, of course, that although we had in mind a tower that would reach the heavens, the supply of materials sufficed only for a dwelling that was just roomy enough for our business on the plane of experience and high enough to survey it; however, that bold undertaking had to fail from lack of material, not to mention the confusion of languages that unavoidably divided the workers over the plan and dispersed them throughout the world, leaving each to build on his own according to his own design. Now we are concerned not so much with the materials as with the plan, and having been warned not to venture some arbitrary and blind project that might entirely exceed our entire capacity [*Vermögen*], yet not being able to abstain from the erection of a sturdy dwelling, we have to aim at an edifice in relation [*Verhältnis*] to the supplies given to us that is at the same time suited to our needs (KrV, A707/B735).

Here, Kant uses the metaphor of the building. However, this metaphor does not accurately reflect the meaning he gives to the term 'architectonic' in the Architectonic of Pure Reason, as explained above. To support this, let us analyze this passage in detail. I will structure this analysis into two main issues. First, in this fragment, Kant clearly distinguishes between the Transcendental Doctrine of Elements and the Transcendental Doctrine of Method ;namely, the most fundamental division of the *Critique*. Secondly, he uses the analogy of the building to illustrate how method, including the Architectonic of Pure Reason mentioned earlier, needs to be critically examined, just as the Doctrine of the Elements has been.

Kant introduces the Transcendental Doctrine of Method by explaining that the Transcendental Doctrine of Elements has already established the building materials and the *estimation* of what sort of edifice is to be built with them. What is missing now is a clear idea of what this edifice should actually be. To illustrate this point, Kant uses the metaphor of a construction project, for which, the first part of the *Critique* has provided the necessary

materials. Therefore, the Doctrine of Elements equipped us with the knowledge of how to evaluate or predict the outcomes that can be achieved using the given materials. This is directly connected to the second issue, which is to emphasize the need for a critical review. Kant's reference to the failure of past architectural projects supports this interpretation. He argues that their failure stemmed from the fact that the plan was initially conceived without considering the available materials. Instead, they should have developed the building idea based on the materials and conditions that were actually available to them. Therefore, the second subject matter of this passage highlights the main task of the Doctrine of Method, which, as we have seen earlier, involves establishing the formal conditions that his envisioned system of pure reason must satisfy. In other words, it emphasizes the critical examination of the 'plan', a step that has not yet been taken in the previous part of the *Critique*. As Kant warns us in this passage, this examination cannot be arbitrarily established.

With that being said, it becomes evident that Kant's use of the metaphor of the edifice does not align with the idea of architectonic as presented in the Doctrine of Method, represented by the metaphor of the growth of the living organism. As Kant writes in the following passage from the Architectonic:

> It is too bad that it is first possible for us to glimpse the idea in a clearer light and to outline a whole architectonically, in accordance with the ends of reason, only after we have long collected relevant cognitions haphazardly like building materials and worked through them technically with only a hint from an idea lying hidden within us (KrV, A835/B863).

In this passage, Kant discusses the metaphor of the building present in the introduction of the Doctrine of Method. He relates this metaphor to the technical use of the schema in the construction process, as viewed from the perspective of the Doctrine of Elements. Therefore, Kant does not envision an architectural meta-systematic philosophy for his system of pure reason, given the meta-systematic requirements that he set in the Architectonic.

Whilst architectonic unity, which is achieved through a relation of articulation, is one of the fundamental conditions that philosophy as a systematic science must fulfill, we can conclude, on the other hand, that the metaphor of the edifice not only has a different meaning than 'architectonic' as articulation and systematic unity but also refers to the technical execution of the schema. If we use the metaphor of the building to describe the relationship of articulation, it does not accurately capture Kant's concept of systematicity. Therefore, if the term 'architectonic' is understood as a well-grounded, homogeneous, and solid structure, then it is conceived in terms of technical unity, which is the kind of composition that Kant precisely states must be avoided.

With that, Kant's immediate successors, for instance, K.L. Reinhold, received Kant's project of systematizing philosophy in architectural instead of architectonic terms. This

gave rise to the restoration of a foundationalist conception of system, which I have shown is not present in Kant's meta-systematic work. This does not involve a change in the features of Kant's notion of system, but also a change in the aim of the inquiry of turning philosophy into a systematic science. Namely, there is a transition from the search for a teleological articulation between the whole and parts to an inquiry into the foundations of philosophy.

§3. *The city over nature: Reinhold's* Elementarphilosophie

Reinhold's *Elementarphilosophie* aimed to prevent the collapse of the project of the Enlightenment. Reinhold believed that this collapse was imminent due to the criticisms that Kant's philosophy received from the skeptics and the Wolffians[6]. Among these criticisms, some were directed at Kant's approach to the systematization of philosophy. One of the main flaws of Kant's meta-systematic philosophy, according to Reinhold, was the lack of a unifying absolute principle. Consequently, Reinhold's objective was to restore the unity and foundations of philosophy, which were at risk of being lost if these criticisms gained enough traction. According to Reinhold, the potential loss lies in the inability to find a unifying absolute foundation on which to ground philosophy, needed to render it a systematic science *stricto sensu.* Thus, Reinhold's foundational project can be seen as having two main objectives. Firstly, it seeks to safeguard the entirety of Enlightenment philosophy and Kant's transcendental project by addressing the aforementioned critiques. Secondly, it aims to resolve the absence of an absolute principle by tracing transcendental philosophy back to its ground. For Reinhold, the restoration of philosophy's scientific validity will also address the lack of unity in Kant's unfinished system of pure reason[7].

One of the most recent publications on this issue is the article titled 'Kant, Reinhold, and the Problem of Philosophical Scientificity' (2024) by Karin de Boer and Gesa Wellman. They argue that Reinhold misinterprets certain aspects of Kantian philosophy and that this misunderstanding should be considered when researching German Idealism. This idea has also been defended by Salvi Turró in his article 'De la filosofia transcendental a la filosofia com a ciència estricta' (1999), some years earlier. Turró, in this article, writes that Kuno Fischer, Ernst Cassirer, Rainer Kroner, and Xavier León have made claims aligned with

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6 The main Wolffians who motivated these criticisms of Kant's philosophy included J.G.E Maass, J.F Flatt, J.A Ulrich, and most notably, J.A Eberhard. Eberhard edited the *Philosophisches Magazin,* a pro-Wolffian journal raised explicitly to oppose the pro-Kantian tendency of the *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung*. The main argument put forth by the Wolffians was that transcendental philosophy necessarily leads to dogmatism because Kant's transcendental unity of apperception results in solipsism. In other words, Kant traps us within the confines of our consciousness, limiting our knowledge to our own representations. One of the consequences of this interpretation of Kant's philosophy is Psychologism, among other demands. Furthermore, it prevents metaphysics from attaining the same level of certainty as mathematics, that is, the status of a strict science. (*Cf.* Beiser, 1987, pp. 223-224).

7 This concern that drives Reinhold's project is not completely unfounded. Kant explicitly writes that he left his system of metaphysics unfinished and that he leaves to his readers the task of completing it (*Cf.* KrV, Axv-xxi). Therefore, Reinhold also remained faithful to Kant's philosophical legacy.

this thesis (*Cf.* Turró, 1999, pp. 61-62). Therefore, to gain a more precise understanding, on this occasion, of Hegel's reception of the Kantian (and previously Wolffian) project of transforming philosophy into a systematic science, we need to examine the interpretative modifications that Reinhold introduces. As de Boer and Wellman write:

> [T]he strategies Reinhold employed to rescue Kant's work from the hands of his critics without estranging Kant's followers came at a price. As we see it, Reinhold's reading of the *Critique* produces subtle yet significant shifts of meaning that are not always easy to identify. And since Reinhold's way of framing Kant's achievements and failures was highly influential, even contemporary historians of modern philosophy often assume that Reinhold's understanding of the *Critique of Pure Reason* was by and large correct (de Boer and Wellman, 2024, p. 184).

In doing so, Reinhold introduced certain elements, such as the drive towards a philosophy of systems and unification, that would initiate what we know as German Idealism, culminating in Hegel's work. Turró points out that Reinhold's essential contribution is the introduction of a foundationalist paradigm. According to this paradigm, the systematization of metaphysics becomes the search for the *unconditioned absolute foundation* of knowledge.

According to Reinhold, completing the system of philosophy is to trace it back to the ground of transcendental philosophy. This, for Reinhold, is "to discover the last fixed ring to be determined and agreed upon" (UdF[8],10-11), which will establish an adequate understanding of philosophy. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the ground (*Grundsatz*), theorems, and corollaries that are universally valid (*allgemeingültig*) and universally accepted (*allgemeingeltend*) (*Cf. Ibid.,*70; translation modified by de Boer and Wellman, 2024, p. 192). Thus, according to de Boer and Wellman: "[...] Reinhold took it upon himself to develop and determine the ultimate principles that Kant, although he built the *Critique of Pure Reason* on a solid foundation... had left undeveloped and undermined" (de Boer and Wellman, 2024, p. 192; *Cf. Beyträge* I: 342). Hence, as they argue, "Reinhold's ultimate goal was to derive the specific principles assumed in the *Critique* and all other disciplines from a single principle" (de Boer and Wellman, 2024, p. 29 ft, p. 201).

The idea that philosophy should be structured as a system with a singular, unconditioned, and absolute foundation "according to the axiomatic-deductive method" (de Boer and Wellman, 2024, p. 197) is one of several misunderstandings that de Boer and Wellman attribute to Reinhold's interpretation of Kant's philosophy. Reinhold assumes that to transform philosophy into a systematic science, one must trace it back until the ultimate universal foundation is uncovered. However, as we saw in the previous section, Kant does

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8 Abbreviation for *Über das Fundament des philosophischen Wissens* (1791) in Band 299, Felix Meiner Philosophische Bibliothek, 1978.

not embrace the architectural notion of system because it fails to meet the architectonic requirement of internal articulation. This meta-systematic philosophy arises from critically examining the possibility of transforming metaphysics into a science. Therefore, as de Boer and Wellman argue, "[Reinhold] attributes to Kant a foundationalism that is at odds with Kant's conception of critique and the principles it establishes" (de Boer and Wellman, 2024, p. 197). As we will see in further detail below, Kant's architectonic notion of system and Hegel's organic systematicity do not align with Reinhold's systematic model.

II

So far, we have shown that Reinhold succeeded in establishing a reading of Kant according to which, for philosophy to become a science, it must have an '*absoluter Grundsatz*' from which every content is derived. Furthermore, as we now know, this idea does not align with what Kant had in mind when envisioning his architectonic - and not architectural - system of metaphysics. Considering this, let us now examine Hegel's stance on this debate. Stekeler-Weithofer has pointed out that Hegel does not construct a system because he does not align with the idea of an architectural-foundationalist system, as explained earlier. Hegel repeatedly writes that the sciences that proceed "by definitions and axioms are immediately set up, followed by a series of principles, the proof of which consists merely in a reduction to those unproven presuppositions [...]" (GW, 20, §151)[9]. Namely, any science that relies on definitions or axioms will be a science that is built upon presuppositions and external elements. Philosophy as a science, on the contrary, does not rely on presuppositions and is internally immanently articulated. Thus, it cannot have a ground or principle that is external to its content, as we will explore further.

As mentioned, Kant envisioned his system of pure reason becoming an architectonic whole where its constituent parts are unified through a relationship of *articulatio*. In light of this, in this section, I will argue that contrary to Stekeler-Weithofer's interpretation, Hegel indeed builds a system of philosophy. However, in agreement with Stekeler-Weithofer, Hegel's intention is not to establish an axiomatic-foundationalist system *à la* Reinhold. Instead, I claim that Hegel seeks to establish an organic system inspired by Kant's architectonic systematicity.

§1. Encyclopedia and system

Hegel is very explicit when stating that for philosophy to be a science, it must become a system. This can be seen, for example, in the Preface of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where Hegel writes that "it is only as a science or as a system that knowing is actual and can be given an exposition" (GW, 9, p. 17). This idea is also expressed in the Introduction to the *Encyclopedia*, where Hegel argues that "philosophizing without a system can be nothing

9 Also see in GW, 12, p. 105; 12, pp. 221-222)

scientific" (GW, 20, §14). Nevertheless, according to Stekeler-Weithofer's interpretation of Hegel's project, the latter *does* write an Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences, but this does not constitute a system. However, if Stekeler-Weithofer's interpretation were correct, it would contradict these passages. Why would Stekeler-Weithofer make such a claim? I contend that Stekeler-Weithofer's claim refers to Hegel's *Encyclopedia.*

Nevertheless, Hegel makes a clear distinction between a general encyclopedia and a philosophical encyclopedia. Let us consider this distinction:

> [T]he whole of philosophy constitutes truly *one* science, but it may also be viewed as a whole made up of several particular sciences. - A philosophical encyclopedia distinguishes itself from other, ordinary encyclopedias in that the latter are meant to be an *aggregate* of sciences that have been included in an ad hoc empirical fashion. Some of these merely bear the name of a science but are a mere collection of data. Because sciences of this kind have been taken up extraneously, the unity into which they are brought together in such an aggregate is itself likewise *extraneous*, i.e., - an arrangement (*Ibid.*, §16)

Thus, Hegel indeed elaborates an encyclopedia, but not just any encyclopedia. A general encyclopedia would simply be a mere collection of disparate knowledge. On the other hand, a philosophical encyclopedia is an interrelated, concrete, self-standing totality of knowledge.

Hegel considers ordinary encyclopedias to be externally constituted, akin to a conglomerate or a "mere aggregate," much like Kant's characterization of technical systematicity. Moreover, if we conceive of the Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences in this way, Hegel clearly states that "[...] such an arrangement must remain a provisional *attempt* and will always display unsuitable sides, especially since its materials are themselves of a contingent nature" (*Idem*). According to Hegel, all attempts to approach systematicity in an empirical and contingent manner - such as the cases of philology and heraldry - must be provisional and ultimately overcome[10].

Contrarily, a philosophical encyclopedia, which is "[t]he science of the [absolute,] is essentially a *system*, since the true insofar as it is *concrete* exists only through unfolding itself in itself, collecting and holding itself together in a unity, i.e. as a *totality*" (*Ibid.*, §14). In other words, a philosophical encyclopedia is a self-collecting and self-holding whole, whose parts are internally articulated. In this type of encyclopedia, "a particular content

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10 In this remark, Hegel further distinguishes between what he calls first "mere aggregates of data," which are the sciences like philology "that seem at first glance to be." (*Cf.* GW, 20, §16) Second, there are sciences based on mere caprice, such as heraldry. Third, there are sciences referred to as *positive* (*Cf. idem*). These include sciences like the history of nature, geography, medicine, and others. We will not delve further into this division. We simply mention it to highlight the distinction that Hegel makes for the sciences of the third type, which he assigns some rational value, although he emphasizes that they still require much improvement.

is justified solely as a moment of the whole" (*Ibid.*, §14). With that, Hegel appears to take on the ultimate version of Kant's architectonic notion of system since "[t]he whole" that the system of philosophy becomes, "[...] presents itself as a circle of circles each of which is a necessary moment, so that the system of its distinctive elements makes up the idea in its entirety, which appears equally in each one of them" (*Ibid.*, §15). Namely, Hegel conceives the systematization of philosophy as a transformation into an autonomous, self-standing, and self-determining whole. In other words, the parts and the whole are not distinct but are generated by it. For this reason, Hegel's system has a circular structure in which each moment is itself an open circle that returns to itself by becoming more concrete and rich.

Having explained the distinction between a philosophical encyclopedia and an ordinary one, we will now assess Hegel's meta-systematic philosophy by examining two main aspects. Firstly, we will discuss Hegel's criticism of the foundationalist conception of system introduced by Reinhold. Secondly, we will delve into Hegel's idea of organicity as a meta-systematic requirement for philosophy to become a system.

§2. Hegel's critique of systematic foundationalism

In §14 of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel clearly expresses a strong rejection of the foundationalist conception of system. For example, as Hegel writes in the 1830 *Encyclopedia*, "By a *system* one wrongly understands a philosophy built on a narrowly circumscribed *principle* distinct from other such principles; contrary to this, however, it is a principle of any genuine philosophy that it contain all particular principles within itself" (GW, 20, §20). Furthermore, in the *Phenomenology* Hegel vehemently argues that Reinhold-Fichte's requirement that the system of philosophy is to be grounded by an *absoluter Grundsatz* "[...] is consequently very easily refuted" (GW, 9, p. 21). He states "[...] any further so-called fundamental proposition or first principle of philosophy, if it is true, is for this reason alone also false just because it is a fundamental proposition or a principle" (*Idem*).

Certainly, Hegel never held Reinhold's philosophy in high regard. Hegel's main criticism of Reinhold's proposal is that he fails to grasp speculative philosophy, which Rockmore nicely describes as "[comprehending] philosophy as grounding knowledge established through analysis" (Rockmore, 2010, p. 61/ *Cf.* GW, 4, pp.157-159; 1977, p. 177). From this main flaw, other aspects of Reinhold's philosophy that Hegel rejects emerge. Here, I will focus only on Hegel's criticism of the idea that philosophy as a science should become a foundationalist system. To develop this, I will present two arguments: first, the argument Hegel writes in the *Differenzschrift*, which is linked to Reinhold's inability to comprehend the nature of speculation; secondly, the argument Hegel provides in the Introduction of both the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia Logic* concerning the dialectical nature of the very notion of an absolute ground.

Hegel, in the *Differenzschrift,* argues that Reinhold failed to grasp the true nature of speculation because he approached Schelling and Fichte's speculative attempts analytically.

According to Hegel, "the analytical way of philosophizing rests on absolute opposition, it is bound to overlook the philosophical [i.e., speculative] aspect of philosophy precisely because the latter aims at absolute synthesis" (GW, 4, pp. 157-159; 1977, p. 177). In other words, Reinhold understood the task of systematizing philosophy as a synthetic process of reconciling the difference between subject and object, or finite and infinite. He attempted to achieve this by reducing the difference between the subjective and the finite (*Cf. Idem*). Hegel links this reductionist view to Reinhold's project of grounding Kant's divided system. Hegel criticizes Reinhold's aim to provide a solid foundation for philosophy, arguing that it "transmute[s] philosophy into the formal element of cognition, that is, into logic" (*Ibid.*, pp. 159-161; 1977, p. 179).

The question we may ask now is why this is problematic for Hegel. The reason he gives is related to the notion of system that we introduced earlier, which is seen as a self-collecting unfolding totality. As Hegel writes:

> Philosophy as a whole grounds itself and the reality of its cognition, both as to form and as to content, within itself. The founding and grounding tendency on the other hand, with all the crowded press of its corroborations and analyses, its becauses and insofars, its therefores and ifs neither gets out of itself nor into philosophy. To the rootless worry that grows ever greater the busier it is, every investigation is premature, every beginning is rashness, and every philosophy is a mere preparatory exercise. Science claims to found itself upon itself by positing each one of its parts absolutely, and thereby constituting identity and knowledge at the beginning and at every single point. As objective totality knowledge founds itself more effectively the more it grows, and its parts are only founded simultaneously with this whole of cognitions. Center and circle are so connected with each other that the first beginning of the circle is already a connection with the center, and the center is not completely a center unless the whole circle, with all of its connections, is completed [...] (*Ibid.*, pp. 161-163; 1977, pp. 179-180)

Namely, as we have seen, philosophy as a science must, according to its own nature, become a self-grounding whole in both form and content. This is, philosophy as a system aims to ground itself by treating each part as absolute (like a circle). Therefore, the relationship between the centre of the circle (the principles) and the circle (the totality of knowledge) is such that the beginning of the circle is inherently linked to the centre, and the centre is only fully realized when the entire circle returns to itself. Hence, philosophy has its own inherent validity, that does not rely on external validations or borrowed analyses. This is how philosophy becomes an articulated science (i.e., 'Science') and distinguishes its own method from the method of the sciences that are mere aggregates. Therefore, the Science cannot derive all its validity from a single principle, as this principle would be finite and external, and

therefore vulnerable to being surpassed by its integration within an articulated whole. This conclusion aligns with the second argument against foundationalism.

As we have begun to see, a system that is built upon an absolute *Grundsatz* incorporates an external element. According to Hegel, the intervention of external elements is profoundly anti-systematic. Furthermore, Hegel contends that the development of the Science itself refutes such a systematic model. This is because it uncovers the true dialectical nature of the very notion of an absolute *Grundsatz*. In other words, the self-development of philosophy towards itself refutes systematic foundationalism. There are two clear examples of this in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic*. First, in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel argues that refuting such a principle involves demonstrating the defects of the *Grundsatz* (*Cf.* GW, 9, p. 21). These shortcomings include the fact that "it is only the universal, or, only a principle, or, it is only the beginning" (*Idem.*). However, refuting such a principle not only involves eliminating the absolute *Grundsatz*, but also involves revealing its inner dialectical development. If the rejection of such a principle were a simple external refutation, then we would fall into the externality that the rejection of the *Grundsatz* aims to avoid. As Hegel writes, "[i]f the refutation is thorough, then it is derived from and developed out of that fundamental proposition or principle itself - the refutation is not pulled off by bringing in counter-assertions and impressions external to the principle." (GW, 9, p. 21). On the contrary, "[s]uch a refutation would thus genuinely be the development of the fundamental proposition itself" (*Idem*).

This refutation of the *Grundsatz,* which is derived from the principle itself, is further developed in the *Science of Logic*. Hegel contends that "[w]hat is determinate [*ein Bestimmtes*] contains an *other* to a first; indeed, it is the other of that 'first'" (GW, 21, p. 59). This happens because the *Grundsatz* is already part of the dialectical process where the principle of determinate negation operates. For this reason, at the very moment when the principle is posited as first, it is negated and transitions to its other. Therefore, any principle that is posited as *first* "is thus always mediated by another - it is what it is, thanks (at least in part) to that other - and as such it cannot be something immediate and original in its own right. It cannot, therefore, come first and be the absolute starting point" (Houlgate, 2021, p. 54). Thus, in the self-holding circular self-determining Science, no principle can be first because its own dialectical force mediates it and makes it lose its status of absoluteness. This is how Hegel argues - against Reinhold - that the meta-systematic idea that the system of philosophy requires an absolute principle is refuted by the Science itself.

§3. Hegel's organic notion of system

As we have shown, Hegel does not align with Reinhold's *Elementarphilosophie*. Therefore, Stekeler-Weithofer is right in stating that Hegel does not undertake a foundationalist notion of system. However, we have indeed seen that the latter relates the scientificity of philosophy to the acquisition of a systematic shape. Thus, Stekeler-Weithofer is not right in claiming

that Hegel does not build a system. In this final section, I will argue that Hegel *does* construct a system of philosophy. Furthermore, I will show that his meta-systematic philosophy is more closely aligned with Kant's notion of an architectonic system, rather than the architectural-technical one. My main claim here is that Hegel develops an *organic* notion of system. Furthermore, I will assert that Hegel's notion of system acquires a much stronger sense of *organicity* than Kant's architectonic notion of system.

Briefly, let us remember Kant's architectonic notion of a systematic science. According to Kant, philosophy can become a systematic science by being an articulated whole, with the parts gathered by an articulating idea. Its growth as a whole is *per intus susceptionem*. The system grows as a whole, and not as a mere aggregation of a manifold. Therefore, an arrangement of parts that form a unity *per apositionem* is unsystematic. In this regard, Hegel shares Kant's architectonic notion of system. While the similarity is already explicit, there is further compelling evidence that Kant's architectonic notion of system can be found in Hegel's meta-systematic philosophy. This evidence is connected to Hegel's use of the concept of organicity as a feature of the philosophical method, as well as his employment of organic metaphors to characterize systematicity. Let us examine Hegel's accounts of his envisioned system.

Hegel, in the *Differenzschrift*, states that "philosophy, as a totality of knowledge produced by reflection, becomes a system, that is, an organic whole of concepts, whose highest law is not the understanding but Reason" (GW, 4, pp. 41-43; 1977, p. 103). In other words, philosophy becomes systematic when it becomes an organic totality of concepts. Hegel further explains that this systematic organicity is produced by reflection and guided by Reason. This means that the systematic coherence of philosophy, according to the later Hegel, is attained through the internal negativity of each concept and the power of speculation of unifying opposing concepts in their opposition[11].

Even more explicitly, in the Preface of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel provides an extensive account of how he conceives the organicity that his system of philosophy is supposed to acquire:

> The bud disappears when the blossom breaks through, and one might say that the former is refuted by the latter. Likewise, through the fruit, the blossom itself may be declared to be a false existence of the plant, since the fruit emerges as the blossom's truth as it comes to replace the blossom itself. These forms are not only distinguished from each other, but, as incompatible with each other, they also supplant each other. However, at the same time their fluid nature makes them into moments of an organic unity in which they are not only not in conflict with each other, but rather, one is equally as necessary as the other, and it is this equal necessity which alone constitutes the life of the whole (GW, 9, p. 10).

11 See *Encyclopedia Logic*; GW, 20, §§79 - 81.

Hence, Hegel, uses the example of the development of the plant to illustrate the internal immanent functioning of his Science. He explains how the inner contradiction arising from the speculative relation between the reflected opposing thought-determinations leads to the transformation of philosophy as an organic system. Initially, the bud is negated and then it gives rise to its other, the blossom, which then transitions and leaves the bud behind. This process continues, as we can read in the quotation. However, it is important to note that the negation of the bud is inherent to the concept of the bud itself, as it is implicit that the bud will become the blossom.

Hegel claims that the *fluid nature* of the different moments of the development of the plant is precisely what provides the necessary conditions for achieving the organic articulation that the system of philosophy aims for. As Hegel writes in some passages later: "[L]ogical necessity in general consists in the nature of what it is to be its concept in its being" (GW, 9, p. 40). He further asserts that "this alone is the rational, the rhythm of the organic whole, and it is just as much the knowing of the content as that content itself is the concept and the essence - that is, it is this alone which is the speculative" (GW, 9, p. 40). This illustrates the organic articulation of Hegel's system of philosophy.

In conclusion, Hegel shares with Kant the idea that a system is an articulated whole, the parts of which are internally articulated and interdependent. Additionally, both authors use the metaphor of the organism to illustrate the development of their envisioned systems of philosophy. Thus, Kant and Hegel share the meta-systematic idea that philosophy, as a science, acquires the shape of a whole, the parts of which are internally articulated instead of merely aggregated.

Conclusion: Differences between Kant and Hegel

Now, despite having demonstrated the alignment between Kant's architectonic notion of system and Hegel's organic idea of system, there is a crucial difference between the two meta-systematic approaches. As discussed in the section dedicated to Kant's account, the articulating element that brings about the systematic totality is a teleological idea. In Kant's view, the idea, although it provides an internal articulation to the systematic whole, is external to the system itself. In other words, the ends of metaphysics are essential to reason, but the finality that unifies the parts into a whole is merely regulative and not constitutive of the system itself. Hegel conceives the organic development of philosophy as what constitutes it as a systematic science. The last claim I make here proceeds as follows: Hegel approaches an organic system in a strong sense. Namely, he achieves a level of organicity that Kant was not able to achieve. However, it is undeniable that Kant's architectonic systematicity has influenced Hegel's meta-systematic philosophy[12].

12 One of the debates we could present here is the discussion regarding the systematic role of teleology in Hegel's *Science of Logic* and his overall system. Due to space limitations, we have refrained from engaging in this debate. However,

The main modification that Hegel introduces concerns the relationship between the whole and the parts. According to Hegel, this relationship must be fully immanent and necessary. Therefore, he approaches the diverse determinations of the system as generated by the whole itself. Taking this into account, two differences need to be considered. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, Hegel does not explicitly differentiate between parts and whole, as the parts constitute the whole and vice versa. Secondly, and more significantly, the articulative "movement" of the system is not driven by a regulative teleological idea but by an immanent dialectic. In other words, according to Hegel, the movement of the whole is a self-differentiating movement that generates its own distinct determinations or moments:

> Science may organize itself only through the proper life of the concept. The determinateness which was taken from the schema and externally stuck onto existence is in science the self-moving soul of the content which has been brought to fulfillment. On the one hand, the movement of 'what is' consists in becoming an other to itself and thus in coming to be its own immanent content; on the other hand, it takes this unfolding back into itself, or it takes its existence back into itself, which is to say, it makes itself into a *moment*, and it simplifies itself into determinateness. [...] In this way, the content shows that its determinateness is not first received from an other and then externally pinned onto it; rather, the content gives itself this determinateness, it bestows on itself the status of being a moment, and it gives itself a place in the whole (GW, 9, p. 38).

Hegel establishes the meta-systematic requirement that philosophy must be developed as a system internally and autonomously. Specifically, it must generate its own determinations and content.

According to Hegel, unlike the other sciences or Reinhold's foundationalist systematicity, philosophy does not receive its content from external sources. Rather, it is the science itself that articulates and generates its own moments. As we have seen, the system of philosophy is a self-collecting and self-holding totality that becomes a *circle of circles*. Hegel states that "for each single member ensouled by the method is reflected into itself" (GW, 12, p. 252), and "each of which is a necessary moment, so that the system of its distinctive elements makes up the idea in its entirety, which appears equally in each one of them" (GW, 20, §15). With that, we can conclude that, in contrast to Kant, Hegel constructs a proper organic system. His system of philosophy meets the architectonic - organic requirement by establishing reciprocal and immanent correlations between its parts. Hegel achieves this strong level of interconnectedness because the relational element is not external; rather, it is

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for an in-depth exploration of the topic, see Edgar Maraguat and James Kreines' special issue, *Hegel and Teleology*, Hegel Bulletin, Volume 44 - Special Issue 1, April 2023, and Edgar Maraguat's recent book *True Purposes in Hegel's Logic*, Cambridge University Press, 2023.

the Science itself that, through reflection and contradiction, generates its own contents and establishes its own distinctions. This is 'the life of the concept'.

To summarize, we have shown that Stekeler-Weithofer is successful in claiming that Hegel does not concede on the idea that philosophy should be derived from a single principle. Namely, the systematization of philosophy is akin to a process of axiomatization. Nevertheless, Hegel does not take systematicity as a mere juxtaposition of knowledge, where the diverse parts or disciplines are ordered alphabetically, as seen in ordinary encyclopedias. Philosophy, as a system, cannot assume the external structure of an ordinary encyclopedia.

Thus, Hegel does *indeed* build a system. I have demonstrated that Hegel considers a system of philosophy to be an *organic* dynamic totality. This idea can be traced back to Kant's notion of an architectonic systematicity. However, I have also argued that Hegel's organic model of system differs from Kant's architectonic account. Hegel replaces the teleological articulation with a method that is immanent and self-standing. This method (that cannot be differentiated form the content of the Science) better facilitates the kind of articulated immanent development that involves a mutual interplay between concepts. Therefore, Hegel envisions the transformation of philosophy into a systematic science as an organic whole of concepts that develops and determines itself immanently through reflection and contradiction.

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