

But do we humans really want to be free?

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Course: Rationality, lecturer: John van Houdt

'I will concede that no interest drives me to it, for that would yield no categorical imperative; but I must necessarily take an interest in it, and gain insight into how it happens to be;...' (Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* [Ak 4:449]).

Introduction

One could say that the Nazi's worked out their Endlösung very rationally. As well as the resistance who on their turn had to gain information/knowledge to break the system of the Nazi's. This shows strategic rationality, but this doesn't explain why it was wrong what the Nazi's did. How do we know that? What has rationality to do with justice?

Kant makes a distinction between practical reason (Praktischen Vernunft) and theoretical reason (Reinen Vernunft). Practical reason is categorical, it's knowledge about how one *ought* to live. It deals with the question if one could state that the Nazi's were wrong. While theoretical knowledge is hypothetical, it's knowledge about the phenomenons, it's about how you can gas three thousand people in one day.

The word reason (as well as rationality) descends from the Latin word ratio. It means the intellectual ability to gain knowledge as well as the ground which reason should reveal. Again a dualism.

Aristotle makes a distinction between passive reason and active reason. Passive reason is the ability of the spirit to be *accessible* for intelligibility. Active reason is *responsible* for actually gaining knowledge.

What we see here is that knowledge has something to do with morality (responsibility, the ground) and with the ability to gain knowledge.

Adam Czerniakow, who defended the interests of Jews during WOII, wrote a diary about his experiences during this war. He committed suicide on the 23rd of July in 1942, one day after the first transport to Treblinka. Czerniakow defined virtue by giving an example. A woman pushes the intestines of a man who got shot, back into his body, and brings him to an aid station where he dies. He was thrown into a mass grave by the Nazi's. The woman digs up his body and buries him.¹

This act, in Czerniakow's eyes, is an act of virtue. A human is never only a means but a purpose in itself. An example of Kant's practical reason I would say. This is however a *concrete* example which Kant will not determine as such. Hegel's critique on Kant is this unsolvable dualism Kant's created. A dualism that presupposes a unity, a concrete historical being. Hegel's critique seems to be that you cannot abstract from the categorical imperative. The consequence of 'considering humans as an end and never as a means' - Kant's categorical

1 Example from the documentary Shoah by Claude Lanzemann

imperative - from Hegel's point of view, seems to be that you can never abstract the end or it's means from its unity.

The reason I introduce Cernikow's definition of virtue is because it shows what I would like to explicit in this paper. The tension between instrumental rationality - abstracted from its content - but, necessarily presupposed to be able to realize the Nazi-regime. And on the other hand, moral rationality - which shows the importance of understanding a human being, singularly, as a goal in itself, which is necessarily presupposed to morality.

Kant's analysis in his Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals is my starting point. In this paper I'll try to get an answer to the question: what is the link between knowledge, the unknowable and morality? I will argue that in case we are conscience beings, aware of the necessary responsibility to act according to the law of freedom, we ought to act according to this law to become moral, however this doesn't necessarily mean we do so.

I will first follow Kant's analysis to really grasp the content of the problem. I will then point out the notion of recursion as link between knowledge and the unknowable. Finally I will conclude with the unity Hegel proposes, which underlines this notion of recursion, to find out its consequences for morality.

And how do we know this is a path worth following? Hegel suggests that we must presuppose rationality (in a recursive sense) to go thinking about it. Even though in advance of our project we will never know if its worth the effort, we must however presuppose its value. In this paper I will show why this is necessary.

Part 1 - Reasonable rationality has something to do with justice

The necessity of a possibility

Kant - in his preface of his Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals - divides rational cognition into *material rational cognition* (which considers some object) and *formal rational cognition*. In the latter case rational cognition concerns *'the form of the understanding of reason itself and the universal rules of thinking in general without distinction among objects'*[AK 4:387]. Material rational cognition is again to be divided into *nature* (physics) and *freedom* (ethics). Formal rational cognition is singularly logic. Logic - in comparison with natural and moral philosophy - can have no empirical part. Nature *happens* in accordance with laws of nature and morality *'in accordance with which everything ought to happen'*[AK 4:388].

Only when philosophy is based on a priori principles it is, according to Kant, pure philosophy. When pure philosophy is limited to determinate objects of understanding Kant calls it metaphysics. Which is again twofold. There is a metaphysics of nature and of morals. So physics and ethics have both an empirical and a rational part. This I will explain.

Every law, says Kant, as the ground of an obligation must carry out an absolute necessity to be morally valid. The ground of this moral obligation is to be sought a priori, in the concepts of pure reason. Otherwise it can never be a moral law, because the *ground* of the obligation is never empirical. Moral philosophy gives us, rational beings, laws a priori. The empirical part of this metaphysics of morals lies in the power of judgement (top-down) which can be sharpened through experience.

That which is morally good, according to Kant, has to happen *for the sake of this law*, not only conform to the moral law. It would be contingent and precarious if it was only conform the moral law. It ought to happen necessarily so to say. There has to be a ground for this duty. The metaphysics of morals searches for the principles of a possible pure will, which is a priori and therefore a probable ground for morality.

Without principles of a good will - Kant continues in the first section of his groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals - moderation in affects and passions, self-control and sober-reflection can become extremely evil. Kant gives an illustrative example which helps us to understand what is going on here. *'For without the principles of a good will they (us, rational beings) can become extremely evil and the cold-bloodedness of a villain makes him not only far more dangerous but also immediately more abominable in our eyes than he would have been held without it.'* ([Ak 4:394] Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals).

So, how can we become cold-blooded by being moderate in affects and passions, self-control and sober-reflection? Because of what Kant already mentioned in his preface. Namely that which is morally good, has to happen *for the sake of this law*, *not only conform* to the moral law. If we act only conform the moral law we can become cold-blooded. That is interesting. The good will is not good through its efficacy (which means: when you get to your

goal it works, not to be mistaken with the word efficiency which means purposeful) but through the good in itself. So good will has to be good in its means, not only because of its purpose: '*Utility or fruitlessness can neither add to nor subtract anything from this worth*' ([Ak 4:394] Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals).

The true vocation of reason is not to produce volition as a means to something else you aim for, but has to produce a will good in itself. Reason in morality is a necessary element according to Kant, because without reason nature works purposeful. We would be naturally determined if reason couldn't help us to become free/human. This is something Hegel will subscribe to, that knowledge helps you to become free. According to Hegel you will experience your unity through insight. This insight you'll gain through an immediate experience of the fear of death. Due to this insight you're able to temporarily (you will after all die one day or another) internalize the natural supremacy. You overcome this fear of death as one knowing, living and free organism (lord of bondsmen).³ The difference between Hegel and Kant is that Kant introduces a dualism to gain this freedom and that Hegel doesn't. Hegel starts with this oneness and makes a division in a dialectical sense. It is a division that stays in and for itself

The sad thing however is that in present-day we use reason to determine ourselves as fully determined species. We reduce our mental activities to brain activities, our capacities to statistics, value to money, health to medical facts, truth to empiricism and so on and so on. I think however that we are able to create our own freedom when we are willing to do the effort. But do we want to be free? Marx thought that the proletarians wanted to be free, to become lords Hegel would say, something Marx presupposed. But do humans really want to be free? Isn't it exhausting to be free? Wouldn't we rather be bondsmen and not worry about our own conscience but the conscience of the lord who we can blame for our misery instead of blaming ourselves? The lord nowadays seems to be consumerism, we determine ourselves as bondsmen of our *desire to have*, instead of becoming a lord by the *desire to know*. This is of course a presupposition which I would have to investigate and this is not the time and place to do that.

It's more an interpretation of which the true meaning becomes clear during a hermeneutic process (and this hermeneutic process will never exhaust cause there will always be new perspectives possible)⁴.

3 Marinke Marcelis, 'Zouden we niet doodgaan dan zou het leven zinloos zijn', paper written for the Masterclass History of Freedom (2011) in which I analyse the fear of death and its result (the freedom to become lord of your bondsmen, which you are both). Not published but open to read, just send an email to info@marinkemarcelis.com

4 Paul Cobben, Post dialectische zedelijkheid, Kok Agora 1996, p.337

Kant says that '*reason which recognizes its highest practical vocation in the grounding of a good will is capable in attaining this aim only of a contentment after its own kind, namely from the fulfilment of an end that again only reason determines, even if this should be bound up with some infringement of the ends of inclination*' [Ak 4:396]. What is important in Kant's sentence is the word 'recognizes'. If we, with our possibility to reason, do not *recognize* our will to be morally good we cannot be good.

The circumstances people live in do not always make it possible to recognize the possibility of morality. Morality has to be acknowledged. We have to be informed about this possibility. But we wouldn't understand the information if we do not presuppose a necessary ability, an openness, a desire to gain insight. It seems that we can show each other the reason why it is necessary to aim for a grounding of a good will. But the ground itself is thus presupposed. This seems to explain Aristotle's distinction between passive reason, the ability of the spirit to be *accessible* for intelligibility and active reason which is *responsible* for actually gaining knowledge. But where does the possibility to gain knowledge and the responsibility of active reason come from?

Part 2: The necessity to presuppose

Recursion

You do not have to know what the concept in itself is to be able to talk about and presuppose the existence of the concept. When I started to study philosophy I was trained already in high school to process text. I knew how to read it, how to re write it, how to communicate with it. And I even thought I knew its meaning, its truth. After all how could I process text, talk about text etc. without knowing it? I presupposed I knew its meaning. I was able to do word processing without really comprehend the text's richness, its fullness, its meaning. Once you do you can see right through it. The text becomes recursive when the signs become pure meaning.

Recursion literally means going backwards, decreasing progression. To refer to itself. The snake who bites in his own tail (like the mythical Ouroboros). The droste-effect and fractals (a thing in a thing in a thing). The danger and power of recursion is that it can lead to circular reasoning. You use what you presuppose to prove the presupposition. For example, when you question freedom you are implicitly free in questioning. Talking about freedom presupposes freedom. It presupposes the possibility to postulate questions. And it also presupposes something or someone who postulates this question. This seems to be the argument for the possibility of freedom and thereby for morality. This recursive argument seems to be some kind of trick. However, a trick I still cannot refute.

When I started in the first year of art academy we were being told that only one person of our class of thirty would become a good artist (whatever that means, but I'll come back to this subjectiveness later). None of us knew who that would be, not even the one who was actually going to be good. However, we all believed it was worth the try. If we would have gone home that first day none of us would have become a good artist. Now at least one could. So we have some sort of believe in the use of the effort of trying. We hope that we will be good and we try because we know that there is a possibility that we might become good. We have to presuppose this possibility. When we give up hope in advance, we know for sure that we're not going to reach what does not exist in advance of our striving.

We're probably lazy because we do not know if our effort is going to be worthwhile. But we won't know until we have tried. And looking at history we see that there are brilliant human beings like Beethoven or Kant who transcend themselves. I think everyone will agree on (there is some universality in) this idea that there are humans who are able to transcend themselves. We may differ however from others in who we determine as having achieved this transcendence. You maybe don't think that Shostakovich is that good, however, I think he actually realized some of his brilliant ideas.

Hegel tries to reveal the presuppositions we postulate. What we see here for example is that we presuppose retention in our striving to become something. Retention is necessarily presupposed to be able to believe in the use of trying to become who one could be.

But what does this all say about morality? And how subjective is this idea? We have to presuppose the existence of morality, and by striving to be good one can become good. In our striving we have to keep in mind that 'which is morally good has to happen for the sake of this law, not only conform to the moral law', otherwise we will not become good as artists but we will maybe - when doing the effort- rise on the bureaucratic ladder. We will become cold-blooded so to say. We are then rational, but in a utilistic, pragmatic way. This is what we see when people become famous for the sake of being famous. According to Kant this would be empty, not good in itself. Wanting to be famous has a negative connotation, because in its end seems to be empty. But is it? Can 'wanting to be famous' not be seen as an end in itself? The categorical imperative seems to make clear what to think of this. Being famous is not a means good in itself but an empty target. But how come it all seems to work through the same principle, good as well as evil? Even when we are free to choose, why would we do the good? Is this necessary?

When we aim for the bad instead of the good, is the result the same? Here we can compare Kant to de Sade. De Sade tries to destroy that what he is not to identify who he is, Kant on the other hand tries to become what he is. They both live up to the law of possibility to become what they aim for. So, if the possibility to become good or bad really works through the same principle, why wouldn't you act as de Sade and become pure evil? Maybe because it isn't exactly the same after all. Because the rights that I claim - due to the categorical imperative - I should claim as rights for the other. A reciprocity which doesn't work for de Sade. And the identity of the noumenal subject of Kant has to *exist*, according to Hegel, as a reflective historical living organism. There is a 'thing that thinks' and this identity has to exist as we saw by the notion of recursion. So you cannot destroy this 'I' that thinks, because then nothing remains to pin this thoughts down to.

If truth is the whole - the necessary presupposition Hegel poses - does this unity have to be an agreement? The aporia to use Ricoeur's word (or dissensus, to refer to Rancière) might be the whole. The notion of recursion shows us that when you go into the thing of the thing of the thing, you will bite your tail. This can mean two things. 1. If truth refers to itself as recursion suggests, we could conclude that - following Kant's categorical imperative - we, in as far as we are free to choose to determine ourselves, have to be morally good. And 2. In as far as we are determined by the other (not by ourselves) we cannot be free.

So morality is evident but we cannot exclude evil. This is so because we are until a certain level free - the presupposition we could assume through recursion - to be moral. Even

when we strive for morality we will never become fully moral, not in this historical world, because we will never be completely free. Not even in the a priori world of mathematics.⁵

Only when we live according to the categorical imperative, for the sake of this law (*it could be*), there is a *possibility that it will be* so. There is no ground when we only live conform the the moral law and not for the sake of the moral law. Ethics has to have a rational and an empirical part we said in part 1. And this is why. When it only has a rational part it's not necessary. It has to be good in itself, in its means, to become good in its result. Kant already understood this and Hegel worked out the consequences.

So I think we might conclude now that the desire to know itself is not only a means to know but a goal in itself. So we have to desire to know. But we have to know to be able to articulate a moral aim. And also this knowledge has to be an end in itself otherwise knowledge will not *become* moral but cold-blooded. So it already exists in and for itself as Hegel would call it.

5 Gödel's incompleteness theorem shows that you cannot investigate all mathematical statements from within mathematics. So mathematics itself is insufficient to investigate all mathematical cases. There will always be mathematical cases you cannot prove or refute by mathematics. So the construction will never be fully constructed, its not a closed system. Even mathematics, as a system without content, will remain incomplete, so how can we use this a priori system of logic to find a synthesis between the practical and theoretical reason that Kant introduces? I think this argument underlines Hegel's critique. Mathematics in itself is without content and the incompleteness theorem of Gödel shows that without something outside of mathematics, mathematics can never be complete. So only the whole can be the truth. An abstraction cut off where it abstracts from is incomplete. To prove consistency one must be inconsistent.

Part 3 – Problem of subjectivity

Last week I thought about the consequences of people capable of loving robots. But it's not that strange after all. Robot's are constructed by humans and reflect us in many ways. Not one to one. But in pure difference, which is again one.

An animal is not able to be moral, because he doesn't know what that means. Robots can be moral as a means, but not for the sake of the moral law. And we? We can be moral if we want to be. Most people who have a conscience (so not some sort of psychopath or somebody with FAS (alcohol syndrom)), know what they ought to do be good. How? We must have some sort of identity in a retentional sense. Things can come back at us. And by nature we avoid pain. We cannot harm the other because we will then harm ourselves. We are lord (free/indeterminate) and bondsmen (determined/fixed) in one as a reflective living organism. When we see fear in the eyes of the other, we recognize our fear what makes it difficult to hurt. Still there are and always will be masochists among us....

Morality is human, but humans are not per definition moral

There is always the necessary evil. We have to work for money to survive and otherwise search for nuts, hunt for animals and seek shelter. So, bad could be the thing we cannot determine ourselves or what we, as de Sade did, choose freely to be. And why should we do that? For the simple fact that we can be evil or, to find an easier way to determine ourselves, by using others as means instead of ends. All speculative possibility's.

There are two ways in preventing the others to determine us. We could kill/hurt the other, or we could recognize the right of the other to exist (on the basis of reciprocity). And only in the last way we can make it possible to become the realization of our unity (never fully). When we kill someone but still find recognition by other people there will remain holes in our self-determination.

You can understand this by a relation table inspired by Jacques Lacan. Say I'm the *signifiantⁿ* and I get determined by others, the *signifié*. And I kill some these *signifié* 's, then I will never be complete. Which I will never be fully of course anyway, but nevertheless, it would be a de-constructive move to kill what bestows part of my identity. The question is: is it necessary to aim for my unity (identity)? We necessarily are one as a reflective living organism. So, we can deny our one ness, but also this will have its price, we will become schizophrenic in a way. This is what you will experience when you start an affair. Consider I'm *signifiantⁿ* and I have a relation with *signifié 3*. I confirm my oneness vertically and can sleep peacefully, but when I start an affair with *signifié 4*, which I have to hide for *signifié 3*, then I will have trouble sleeping because I cannot diagonally or horizontally recognize *signifiant 4*. If

however signifié 5 recognizes my relation with signifié 6 in an open relationship the vertically movement remains intact, broadens so to say.⁶

<i>signifiant 1</i>	<i>signifiant 2</i>	<i>signifiant 3</i>	<i>signifiant 4</i>	<i>signifiant 5</i>	<i>signifiant 6</i>
<i>signifié 1</i>	<i>signifié 2</i>	<i>signifié 3</i>	<i>signifié 4</i>	<i>signifié 5</i>	<i>signifié 6</i>

When we are able to love robots. A robot ought to be able to give meaning, in a human sense. Maybe they do give meaning as in the sense of a signifiéⁿ. And maybe we are able to program robots so that they act *according to* the categorical imperative. But, not *for the sake* of the categorical imperative. Because then there has to be a law that can inflict them. What then is the mortal 'I' of the robot to pin this identity down to. In other words: things cannot come back at robots in an absolute sense, as to human beings. Unless of course we would be able to value their existence as reflective living organisms...

Irrationality

For me it is still unclear at this point what irrationality means, and if we can be irrational. Irrationality literally means 'not by means of reason'. This are so to say our passions an inclinations. And true, a relationship is not pure passion, it is the rational part of love. Falling in love and having sex is irrational I guess. But if we, according to Hegel, are reflective living organisms, we always think *and* act at the same time. We think about ourselves as 'being in love' and we are aware, at least a little, during sex...Still I think there are moments of unawareness to say the least. So maybe we are one reflective living organism, we are not always aware of that fact. The awareness is part of our ability to determine ourselves. And how can a robot be aware of itself?

We cannot escape humanity!

Things cannot disappear, they change. And this changing can happen in infinitely different ways. Truth is this oneness, this never disappearing. When you blow a balloon you can blow until the balloon explodes, you can deflate the balloon or keep the air inside (for a while, eventually it will deflate). This seems to be a nice analogy for what I just said. There *is* truth, which can *become* determined for a while but will become undetermined again.

⁶ The difference between this horizontal and vertical relationships, in an abstract sense, I will investigate in an upcoming paper. However, I introduced this example here to show the importance of a (temporary) determination of an identity in a noumenal sense (vertically) instead of in an empirical sense (horizontally).

Part 4 - Forced by the truth itself

Back to Kant's dualism and Hegel's ich is ich

It seems to me that what Kant calls duty one can compare to the will Nietzsche talks about. But where Kant postulates a hope for a last cause (i.e. God), Nietzsche presents a way to overcome this striving by creating his idea of an Übermensch: we have to overcome nihilism and determine our own 'Zweck'. This however is a subjective overcoming which Hegel on his turn will try to overcome by showing what is necessarily presupposed to be able to become lord in the first place. Hegel creates a necessary dialectic relation between the lord and the bondsmen (which we are both). In our freedom we can become lords. Meaning that we have to presuppose a necessary possibility of being able to become lord. So, what stimulates us to be rational?

'When these men and the principles of this kind had had their day, as the latter were found inadequate to generate the nature of things, men were again forced by the truth itself, as we said, to inquire the next kind of cause.' (Aristotle, *Metaphysics book I(A) § 3 984b8 - 984b22*)

When I was having driving lessons, a few years ago, my instructor gave me a useful insight. One day we were driving and I had made a mistake. I kept going on about it (because I don't like to make mistakes) when the instructor told me: 'When you're driving you cannot be thinking about your earlier mistakes *because you're driving now*. You have to be in this moment otherwise you'll provoke accidents.' This is an interesting given. We are driving (forced by the truth) but we can anticipate to what might come (gain insight, learn).

So we are on our way, in our surroundings of which we are part of as concrete living organisms. We can anticipate in a rational sense. And when we do not want to make accidents we can better start thinking how to prevent us from getting into things we don't want us to get into. Of course, we cannot control everything because we are part of our surroundings. We will always be determined by our surroundings in one way or another. We cannot become entirely free but we can become lord of our bondsmen, we can determine ourselves up to a certain point.

'...;for the wise man must not be ordered but must order, and he must not obey another, but the less wise must obey him.' (Aristoteles, *Metaphysics book I(A) §2 982a4-982a19*)

It is exciting when you feel that you're in charge. Baby's get excited when they begin to realize that they can interact with their surroundings. Or even stronger, they show excitement when they understand that they can influence their surroundings themselves. We want to intensify our possibility to take/gain control.

People who say that they are in charge are in charge until somebody else says claims power. Since the lord becomes lord only when the bondsmen let the lord become lord. And when will they do that? When one is afraid of the lord or thinks that the lord benefits his needs without being responsible for those needs himself or both.

'To be beneficent where one can is a duty' Kant says. Only when one acts solely from duty, and that means act without inclination, one can have its moral worth. 'But even without looking at duty, all human beings always have of themselves the most powerful and inward inclination to happiness, because precisely in this idea all inclinations are united as a sum.' But to be united as a sum presupposes a goal, something we want, according to Kant, being happy.

'...:an action of duty has its moral worth not in the aim that is supposed to be attained by it, ...;thus that worth depends not on [Ak 4:400] the actuality of the object of the action, but merely on the principle of the volition, in accordance with which the action is done, without regard to any object of the faculty of desire.'

So Kant here tries to explain why we shouldn't be focussed on our object of desire but on the principle of the will, the desire itself, the means. But the difficulty seems to be here that he distinguishes the object of desire (a posteriori) from the desire (a priori). But as Hegel explains in his introduction to *The Science of Logic*, is that the final consequence of a means as an end (which for Kant is only applicable to humans, which would already be problematic) is that you cannot abstract the means from this end. Hegel states it is already inadequate to abstract from the content in the first place because it then *'only teaches the rule of thinking without being able to engage in what is being thought or to take its composition into consideration.'* This is also why Hegel sees truth as the unity that is presupposed. According to Hegel *'knowledge is present in and for itself'*. Thoughts by itself are empty, they are in need for the object, the material, in order to complete itself.

Kant thinks that a cognition can be true without knowing the subject matter in itself. Hegel critiques Kant by saying that the forms have to apply to the things in themselves because otherwise the things in themselves are something untrue.

'So logic must indeed at first be learned as something which one may well understand and penetrate into but in which, at the beginning, one misses the scope, depth and broader significance' (Hegel, *The Science of Logic*). This reminds me to what I mentioned earlier in part 2 about starting to read philosophy, but that in the beginning, you do not grasp its full content. Hegel continues: *'Now although this power of logic is not consciously present to spirit in the beginning of its study, such a study will nevertheless impart to it the inward power which will lead to the truth.'* He continues a little further: *'...the power to grasp and hold them in their essentiality, to strip them of every externality and in this way to abstract from them the logical element – or what is the same thing, the power to fill the abstract groundwork of logic*

previously acquired through study with the content of every truth, and to bestow upon this content the value of a universal which no longer stands as a particular alongside other particulars but embraces them all in its grasp and is their essence, the absolutely true.'

Kant's categories, Hegel criticizes, have a transcendental nature which leads to the problem that they in themselves are empty. According to Hegel however the form within itself has the capacity to determine itself, to give itself a necessary content. Hegel: *'Thus it is the whole concept which we must consider, first as existent concept, and then as concept; in the one case it is concept only implicitly, in itself, the concept of reality or being; in the other, it is the concept as such, the concept that exists for itself.'*

So Hegel, as Aristotle and Kant, makes again a division, but this time proceeding from another starting position. He brings in the presuppositions instead of creating a synthesis, like Kant proposed. It is a necessary division that follows from The Science of Logic. We exist and therefore are (Hegel defines this as the logic of being). And because of our existence our categories are not empty, the essence is already within itself objectively, it is no longer external so to say.

So we aren't good *only* because we achieved this goodness by being good - which Aristotle seems to suggest - but *for the sake of* this possibility that we can become good which we necessarily presuppose. Hegel underlines this necessity because *'in the philosophical treatment of division, the concept must show that it itself holds the source of the determination.'*

Some last words

We are rational because we are already 'on our way', and we want to prevent us from bumping our heads. In other words: we want to internalize the natural supremacy. This spontaneity problem, the fact that we are already thinking before we start thinking, shows the necessity of recursion. Only in a narrative we can give account to our thinking. Hegel shows that the status of the narrative makes us move. It's not about the definition itself but how you come to this definition. Rationality as the possibility to give narrative in a recursive sense, the ability to bring in presuppositions. The conceptual act of the philosopher is to think the unthinkable, to give notion of notion giving. We shape/show our relation to truth in /through the narrative we create. The whole truth is the narrative I give, it's falseness included.

When our concept of the things in itself (Gegenstand) coincides with this Gegenstand our knowledge will be true. To be able to gain true knowledge we have to walk the road of despair and bring in all presuppositions. Even though we will never reach this stage of true knowledge, at least we now have a basis for claims of absoluteness.

Hegel radicalises Kant's idea that what we know does not exist on its own. We are (as a consciousness) related to this thing in itself. You always divide one peculiarity from another peculiarity. But to be able to divide, involvement is presupposed. So the nature of division is its being on itself. So is freedom the determination of this being on itself. This involvement on division is what makes knowledge true (compare the relation self-other, it's about this '-', this relation, between self and other what is true).

I'd like to conclude with a last example to show the double bind of rationality. It's potential cold-bloodedness and its ground for morality. In the science section of the De Volkskrant (Saturday December 17th 2011), Peter Giesen writes about the Master thesis of Joppe van Driel⁷. This thesis is about the mathematician, physicist and philosopher Jean the Castillon (1709-1791). The religious Castillon developed a strict methodology to attack the position of atheists, but his methodology finally led to undermining religious authority. Van Driel states that science didn't struggle out of the hold of religion during the Enlightenment (age of reason), it were indeed the atheistic materialists who were intolerant and dogmatic. The contradiction between religion and science is a very contemporary point of view, van Driel points out. The atheistic materialists of the 18th century reduced the whole truth to matter. Religiously inspired philosophers as Castillon on the other hand left some space for doubt and pluralism. They wanted to get to know God (which you in a philosophical sense might call the unknowable) better. So, they used reason to get closer to God. This led to the unintended

7 Joppe van Driel wrote this thesis for the Interdisciplinary Master of Philosophy and Science of University of Utrecht with which he won a thesis prize by the National Institute for Social Science and de Volkskrant.

result of religious scientists and philosophers to undermine the authority of religion, so, due to their search for God.

Why I introduce this example is not because I want to give a plea for religion but to show the importance of the search for the unknowable. This dialectical path led to secularization, not - as one nowadays often suggests - some reduced atheistic and materialistic methodology. When we aim for efficiency in a materialistic way, our search becomes cold-blooded, empty, dogmatic and intolerant. We have to assume - in a critical and reasonable way of course - to reveal. The notion of recursion makes it possible to create a temporary identity. And only when there is a responsible identity possible, morality is possible. Every determination is however a temporary determination. But we have to create a narrative where there is none to explicit its presuppositions!

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