

Christian Krijnen

## The Very Idea of Organization: Towards a Hegelian Exposition

**Abstract:** The contemporary debate on the social ontological foundations of organization does not, for methodological reasons, sufficiently get a grip on the phenomenon of organization. The original determinacy of organization remains presupposed. To render this implicit meaning of organization explicit, another, more embracing and in-depth methodology is needed. German idealist types of philosophy provide an extremely powerful methodology. In the philosophy of German idealism from Kant to Hegel, along with neo-Kantianism and up to contemporary transcendental philosophy, however, the idea of organization is not addressed. Indeed, it is a challenge to construct the idea of organization from the perspective of German idealism: the perspective of reason, and with that, of freedom. It results in a new framework for dealing with organization in theory and practice. The article constructs the idea of organization (and claims that it still makes sense to do so) within the framework of G.W.F. Hegel. It shows where the issue of organization should be addressed topologically in Hegel's system of philosophy and what, then, organization shows to be here speculatively.

**Keywords:** social ontology, organization, Hegel, transcendental philosophy, philosophy of the social sciences

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### Organization as a Philosophical Problem

A closer look into the contemporary debate in organization studies about the foundations of organizational research, the so called 'meta-theoretical debate', shows that this debate is running into difficulties regarding the basic concept of the reality that organization studies deal with, that is to say, regarding the ontology of organization. The meta-theoretical debate poses the question: what is an organization? In what follows, I shall present an answer to this question by means of a proper exposition of the concept of organization from a Hegelian perspective. An exposition does not aim to produce a full-blown philosophy of organization, rather, its purpose is to supply a well-determined *beginning* of a philosophy of organization within the system of philosophy: it reveals the place of the concept of organization, and with that its initial determinacy. For reasons of space, I shall focus on methodological aspects concerning the construction of the concept of organization. Let me first elucidate the reason for this, at first sight, rather abstruse approach.

An ontology, i.e. a theory of an object, a matter, as such, and more precisely, a social ontology, i.e. an ontology of the social sphere, is a core issue of the 'meta-theoretical' debate within organizational research. In the eighties and nineties of the last century, this debate was largely dominated by researchers operating from the point of view of either positivism (e.g. Donaldson 2003) or social constructionism—also called: social constructivism or post-modernism (e.g. Linstead 2004; Westwood and Linstead 2001). Since the middle of the nineties, 'critical realism' has become an important participant in it (cf. e.g. Reed 2000, 2005; Danermark, ed. 2002; Ackroyd and Fleetwood 2000; Fleetwood and Ackroyd, eds. 2004).

The main contributors to the foundational discourse that accompanies organizational research are social scientists: the debate is an internal one within the *social sciences*. From the perspective of *philosophy* and its standards, however, it cannot be overlooked that in this foundational debate philosophical concepts are used but that a *sufficient reflection on the determination and validity of these concepts is lacking*. An in-depth reflection on this debate directly leads to an idealist approach as paradigmatically developed within the tradition of German idealism, and its relevance for contemporary social philosophy (Krijnen 2015: chap. 1).

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Against this background, I have tried to carve out the approach of Kantian transcendental philosophy (as it has taken shape particularly in neo-Kantianism and contemporary transcendental philosophy) and of Hegel's philosophy regarding the foundations of social reality, and to confront both approaches with each other. The result of this exploration eventually boiled down to a Hegelian turn in social ontology and a corresponding construction of the concept of organization (Krijnen 2015). Therefore, the upcoming exposition of the concept of organization follows Hegel's line of thought.

Before exposing the concept of organization, it seems opportune to make three important methodological remarks, concerning the more general notion of the 'social', to which the more specific notion of 'organization' apparently belongs.

First, seen from the perspective of a history of the problems of philosophy (*Problemgeschichte*), the concept of the social traditionally belongs to the domain of 'practical philosophy', particularly political philosophy, including philosophy of law and the state, and moral (ethical) philosophy (Röttgers 2002: 25ff.). The social as a genuine, independent, specific realm of meaning only became a concept for theoretical and philosophical determination in the course of the nineteenth century. Hence, the social is younger than the philosophy of German idealism. As a consequence, we are referred to post-Hegelian history. Post-Hegelian history supplies the material for *us*,

when we aim to construct the social in *Hegel's* philosophy. Moreover, it can be shown that the history of the social and of social philosophy begins with the neo-Kantian movement (Röttgers 2002: 47ff.). This movement dominated the philosophical discourse the last decades of the nineteenth and the first of the twentieth century. Therefore, neo-Kantianism, the subsequent Kantian transcendental philosophy inspired by it, and Hegel make up the spectrum of idealist philosophical positions for constructing sociality.

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Second, in the course of this construction the possibility of addressing the concept of organization emerges philosophically: The problem of 'actualizing freedom' (Hegel) or 'realizing validity' (Kantian transcendental philosophy) implies the issue of organization as a subsequent social philosophical topic. The social is essentially the realm of realizing values, to articulate it in terms of Kantian transcendental philosophy, or that of objective spirit as the realm of actualizing freedom, to apply Hegel's terminology. Realizing validity, actualizing freedom, however, is conceived of differently in both traditions. Whereas Hegel conceptualizes actualizing freedom as a development of unconditionedness (development of free spirit in the realm of objective spirit), Kantian transcendental philosophy conceptualizes it as a development from conditionality into unconditionedness (i.e. from conditional into unconditional self-formation of the subject, from conditional validity into unconditional validity).

The former model of development turns out to be more advantageous (Krijnen 2015: chap. 4). From a systematical point of view, therefore, it is more promising to accomplish the exposition of the concept of organization within the framework of Hegel's philosophy. Nevertheless, in the course of a thorough confrontation between the conception of realizing validity of Kantian transcendental philosophy and Hegel's conception of actualizing freedom, a perspective occurs that is very relevant for the concept of organization, though not addressed by Hegel. This perspective is related to freedom, but it does not qualify figures of unconditionedness on the level of unconditionedness. In fact, it concerns another dimension: the dimension of their inner instrumental (teleological) purposefulness. To put it less ambiguously, it concerns the dimension of their inner purposive (appropriate) organization conform the idea or value of utility, and with that of the economic-social fundamental values of economic and social profitability, sustainability, and favorability (cf. on these values Flach (1997: 137 ff.))—the purposeful organization of figures of objective spirit. This yields a very complex subsequent social philosophical topic, in need of further exploration: the philosophical exposition of the concept of organization, hence, of a basic concept of the social sciences.

Third, the methodological issue of revisiting phenomenology. What is at issue here? At the beginning of the series of investigations into social ontology

in general and organization in particular, a phenomenology is necessary in order to scientifically establish organization as a legitimate issue for philosophical explorations.<sup>1</sup> In discussion with what Kant calls the 'fruitful *bathos* of experience', that is to say, with determinations of organization supplied by organization studies including its meta-theoretical debate, a desideratum has been achieved. It transpired that determinations of organizations resulting from a direct relation to its object (*intentio prima et recta*) always presuppose the original determinacy and validity of 'organization', and hence, of a more original concept of organization in need of philosophical exploration. This exploration is forced to go beyond the present meta-theoretical debate on organization too. Therefore, in the course of the initial phenomenology at most 'organization' has been established as a genuine philosophical *problem*.

This, however, does not suffice for an *exposition* of the concept of organization. An exposition requires considerably more material determinations of organization, which need to be ordered successively in a justified way. These material determinations also have to be delivered phenomenologically.<sup>2</sup> That is to say that phenomenology should be revisited. Revisiting phenomenology addresses the history of organization and organization theory concerning contents relevant for the basic features of organization. As a result, based on the current state of affairs in relation to organization theory, a general concept of organization with a maximal extension is established. This concept also integrates the history of philosophy, in particular of political philosophy, a branch of philosophy organization theory refers to frequently. To give attention to the history of political philosophy, however, requires a strong reconstructive approach, as in that history organization is not a topic on its own: at most it is addressed implicitly. Organization in the sense of organization theory is not specifically thematic in the history of philosophy before Hegel, or more generally, in history as such; in fact, it is mainly co-addressed in other contexts.

That this is in fact the case also transpires from the perspective of the history of the concept (*Begriffsgeschichte*) of organization (cf. Dohrn-van Rossum and Böckenförde 1972). To the days of German idealism, the concept of

1 This function of a phenomenology stems from Hegel's *Phänomenologie* too insofar as this work is an introduction into thought as the speculative subject matter of philosophy (*Logik*). It is also guiding for, among other philosophers, Edmund Husserl, who correspondingly distinguishes between a 'phenomenological' reduction and an 'eidetic' one. Also the neo-Kantian Wilhelm Windelband or the contemporary transcendental philosopher Hans Wagner, for instance, offer a phenomenology in the sketched sense. Cf. Krijnen 2008: 59-62 incl. note 13 and pp. 67 ff.

2 Whereas Hegel's *Phänomenologie*, by contrast, is from the start developed from material determinations, and the *Enzyklopädie* continuously integrates the historically available meanings of a concept.

organization remains primarily connected to the context of right and state. In the course of the nineteenth century, the concept of organization broadens its scope of application and becomes established as a guiding concept for discussions about a conscious change of the society and its order. It concerns a discussion that not least emerges from the social antagonism that went along with the working population of the nineteenth century. The concept of organization, then, is *extended*. It refers to the connection of many, pursuing common purposes, entities, capable of goal-setting and goal-realizing by actions. Hence, the restriction to arrangements and business processes in the realm of the state and politics is disclosed. The concept of organization is transformed into a technical term of the emerging business studies and of sociology, and finally even into a fundamental concept of interpersonal activity.

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Such explorations into the history of the meaning of the concept of organization lead to at least two different insights, which are significant for comprehending organization philosophically, in first instance and, of course, significant for the exposition of organization as a phenomenon of spirit. First, a *general* concept of organization with a *maximal extension* comes to light. Second, *perspectives* or paradigms of organizational research come into focus; organization theory conceptually determines the general concept of organization within such perspectives.

Concerning the latter, scholars continuously emphasize that organizational research can only be achieved within the framework of fundamental points of view, regardless of whether they are called 'definitions', 'perspectives', 'paradigms', 'views', or 'concepts' of organization (Scott 2003; Geus 1989; Strati 2000; Diest 2010; Reed 2005). Such fundamental points of view first constitute the field of organizational research and are supposed to be neither verifiable empirically within a certain paradigm nor can they be fully reconciled by scientific research, as this research itself is based on fundamental assumptions about the subject matter of organizational research. Therefore, it is all the more surprising that within organization theory we can observe a dominating *overarching* concept of organization. This concept seems both regarding its form and matter not to relate to a paradigm. Hence, we are facing a dominant paradigm-unladen concept of organization. Moreover, this dominant paradigm-unladen concept does not conceive of organization merely as a specific, restricted phenomenon, for example of the modern economy, but as a human phenomenon *sui generis*.

According to this concept, organization consists of a) *humans*, b) *cooperating* c) in order to achieve a *purpose* or several purposes. Sociality, explicit determinations of purposes, and coordination (formalization) characterize the phenomenon of organization as the subject matter of organization studies. This general determination of organization makes up the foundation for

distinguishing different *perspectives* (paradigms, etcetera) of organizational research. These perspectives supply us with aspects that are superordinate and yet immediately materially related to organization. These material aspects, as far as they are relevant, need to be translated into the intended philosophical concept of organization. Without doubt, existing attempts by the social sciences and philosophy to determine organization and its foundations conceptually are important *material*. The meaning and significance of this material itself, however, is to be determined by a genuine *philosophy* of organization, aiming to determine systematically the concept that is in need of determination: the concept of organization. As far as a philosophical *exposition* of the concept of organization is concerned, the available material is of only rudimentary relevance (by contrast, it is all the more relevant for a doctrinal elaboration of the concept of organization). This relevance has already become manifest: it was by means of a phenomenological consideration that we have been able to come up with a general concept of organization based on *organization theory*. It is this phenomenologically established concept that needs to be exposed speculatively. In order to do so, in first instance, it needs to be clarified where in Hegel's philosophy such an exposition should take place.

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### Organization in Hegel's philosophy of spirit, topologically

Revisiting phenomenology results in a rich, rewarding, and at the same time fundamental determination of organization from the perspective of organization theory. If we connect the material collected phenomenologically with Hegel's philosophy, then it becomes apparent that the attempt to determine organization is related to a number of themes addressed in Hegel's philosophy, especially in his philosophy of spirit: freedom, survival, creativity, theoretical and practical epistemic competencies, the plurality of subjects and problems of order and coordination accompanying it, the abstract character of systems of rules and their embedding in shared forms of normativity, the dependence of the activity of the subject on a natural and personal environment, and so forth. Differing from current concepts of organization in terms of 'perspectives' etcetera, Hegel does not hivel off the indicated aspects but conceives of them in their intrinsic relationship.

Where in Hegel's philosophy of spirit, then, is the phenomenon of organization to be located initially? That is to say, where in Hegel's philosophy of spirit should it be located conceptually as a topic for philosophical investigation?

The answer that organization is a figure of *free* spirit could pave the way for finding its appropriate place. There are many good reasons for taking organization as a figure of free spirit. They come to light by focusing on the general and most comprehensive determination of organization that appeared to underlie the 'definitions', 'perspectives', and 'paradigms' of organization:

organizations consist of humans, cooperating in order to achieve a purpose or several purposes.

From this, we can conclude first that the phenomenon of organization, as addressed by organizational research, is not a phenomenon of *subjective* spirit but of *objective* spirit. Organization is a figure of the spirit, to put it in terms of “free spirit,” that “knows” and “wants” itself as free, spirit that has freedom, the “essence” of spirit, to its determination and makes its own freedom to its “purpose.” (Hegel 1991: §§ 481 with 482, cf. 469) This form of spirit realizes itself in an externally found objectivity, transforming this objectivity into a world that is determined by free spirit. This dimension of objectifying freedom represents a departure from the subjective dimension as a ‘relation to itself’. Within the context of the philosophy of objective spirit, Hegel conceives of free spirit as a “purpose activity” (Hegel 1991: § 484), striving to bring the inner (essential, free) determination of spirit into being. Organization is not a natural product: it is a result of humans giving shape to the world, and hence, the result of freedom or free-spiritual endeavors—a shape of humans that are the subject of theoretical and practical activity.

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All these affinities with Hegel’s philosophy of spirit should not lead to losing sight of another issue no less important—‘organization’ is as such not thematic in Hegel’s doctrine of free spirit and its figures (although aspects of organization are occasionally touched upon). This is a significant insight. It will continuously play a role in the following and in the course of that obtain a more precise determination. What matters now is to set organization apart from the figures of objective spirit, while at the same time making plausible that the concept of organization contains a concern that deserves to be translated into a philosophical concept.

The conducted phenomenology of the concept of organization finally resulted in organization as the form of conscious cooperative purposive activity. The philosophy of organization has to determine this form. In doing so, it determines what conscious cooperative purposive activity itself is. It is hardly a surprise that the purposeful organization of figures of objective spirit was and is mainly discussed in terms of ‘instrumental rationality’. The mere instrumental view on actualizing purposes, however, has been overcome in principle within contemporary transcendental philosophy (by the economic-social idea); actually, the instrumental view has neither been guiding Hegel’s philosophy of objective spirit—which is a doctrine of the objectification of *free* spirit (Krijnen 2015: chap. 4). Hence, organization should be comprehended as a moment of the unconditionedness of figures of objective spirit.

In this regard, it has to be emphasized that organization concern utility. Organizations are conscious cooperative alliances of humans in order to achieve



purposes, goal-determined, goal-oriented communities, focused on actualizing purposes. Organization as a topic or figure of objective spirit, however, does not concern these objective figures themselves as unconditional forms of shaping human subjectivity or forms of free spirit. Organization concerns another dimension: the dimension of inner purposefulness of these objective figures of freedom, videlicet their inner arrangement according to the idea or value of the utile. Hence, the arrangement of objective figures in conformity with the purpose of utility becomes the issue to consider; an arrangement, whose free form itself is guaranteed by the figures of objective spirit themselves: they are figures of free spirit.

These considerations differ from Hegel's insofar as Hegel's philosophy of spirit and its development are guided by self-knowledge of the idea as spirit, intending to comprehend spirit as the "producer of its own freedom" and the development of the concept of spirit as spirit "freeing" itself from "all forms of existence not adequate to its concept." (Hegel 1971: vol. 8, § 382 A) The figures of existence of free spirit as objective spirit themselves and their relationships are the subject matter of Hegel's philosophy of objective spirit. The function that a certain figure has for actualizing freedom, and hence, the determinacy of this figure, is the issue, not the inner arrangement of a figure of objective spirit according to the idea of utility as the effectivity and efficiency of conscious actualization of purposes.<sup>3</sup> Effectivity, here, is not focused on the function for freedom a figure of objective spirit has, and hence, on the relevant form of actualizing purposes itself, but on a concrete content as the purpose that free spirits intend to actualize. The focus is not on the presuppositions of successful actualization of purposes: these presuppositions must count as fulfilled, as otherwise there would not exist any actualization of a purpose at all, which would make the question concerning its useful arrangement superfluous. The exposition of the concept of organization and the subsequent development of its principles are the answer to this question.

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Where does the concept of organization occur? To put it more precisely, where would the concept of organization have occurred as an issue to be comprehended philosophically if Hegel had addressed it specifically? To answer this question, one should be mindful of the place in the system of philosophy where the concept of organization, which resulted from revisiting phenomenology, can be captured most appositely.

A first run-through of the philosophy of spirit resulted in *objective* spirit as the place where the concept of organization has to be exposed. Seen more

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3 These concepts are to be understood in the general sense mentioned, and hence, not from the start in an economically reduced sense (a legal system is useful too—not, however, because it is financially more profitable to have one instead of none, but because it is useful for the freedom of the subject).



closely, objective spirit contains three different forms of actualizing freedom: (abstract) right, morality, and *Sittlichkeit*. It is illuminating to go through these forms *via negativa*, that is to say, by excluding options.

Abstract right only contains an abstract rationality of right. As an organized (and guaranteed) legal system, right is addressed on the level of *Sittlichkeit* (Hegel 1991: §§ 488–502; 1955: §§ 34–104). Basically, the same applies to *morality*. Morality concerns the inner constitution of the will of the person (Hegel 1991: § 503; cf. 1955: § 105). Both are relevant for organizational phenomena and part of their determinacy. However, they do not qualify such phenomena specifically. As a result, *Sittlichkeit* remains as the adequate place of exposition. Here, in the “living good” (Hegel 1955: § 142), the abstractness of both the objectivity of a formal system of rules of right and of the will reflected in itself has been overcome in favor of a substantial will.

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Although particularly the early texts of organization theory offer a rather wide concept of organization, which includes families too, on the basis of the concept of organization gathered phenomenologically—having a relatively high formalized social structure and a relatively specific purpose-determinacy—family in the Hegelian sense becomes no longer relevant. Rather, it is *civil society* which constitutes the proper place to expose the concept of organization within Hegel’s philosophy of spirit. Here, we are dealing with independent free spirits that have their particular interests “in their conscious and as their purpose” (Hegel 1991: § 523). Yet, this only forms for Hegel “the one principle of civil society” (Hegel 1955: § 182). Hegel conceives of them in their relatedness: The “relation” (Hegel 1955: § 182) to other such particular persons, all striving to actualize their particular interests—hence, the “mediating relation of independent extremes” (Hegel 1991: § 523)—is the other principle of civil society (Hegel 1955: § 182). More precisely and by implication, the “self-seeking end in its actualization” (Hegel 1955: § 183) concerns a “system of atomism” (Hegel 1991: § 523), a system of “all-around dependence” (Hegel 1955: § 183), a *Sittlichkeit* “lost in its extremes” (Hegel 1955: § 184).

Hegel denotes this system initially also as an “external state,” as a “state of understanding” or of “need” (*Not- und Verstandesstaat*).<sup>4</sup> In this kind of state, the citizens are private persons that all have their own interest as their purpose; the universal, hence, appears for them merely as a “means.” With this, however, they at the same time determine their knowing, wanting, and acting “in conformity with the universal,” making themselves into a “link in the chain” of this relation, which is the state (Hegel 1955: § 187). Organization just is such an *external state*, a state of understanding.

4 Hegel 1955: § 183; cf. Hegel 1991: § 523. The *Not- und Verstandesstaat* stands in contrast to the “proper political” (Hegel 1955: § 268) or “substantial” state (Hegel 1991: § 534).

In order to characterize the concept of organization more in detail via negativa, it makes sense to relate it to the first moment of civil society, that is the "system of needs" (Hegel 1991: §§ 524 ff.; 1955: §§ 189 ff.), as well as to distinguish organization from 'economy', hence, from a sphere that is of major interest in Hegel's doctrine of civil society. In addition, it is important to distinguish between Hegel's perspective of knowledge of civil society and the perspective that is required by a conceptual development of the concept of organization.

It firstly can be noted that by determining organization as an external state, organization is not conceived of as merely 'instrumentally': organization has turned into a moment of something higher or more universal that is freedom. This aspect of being a moment of a higher determination of freedom, and hence, of having a specific function for actualizing freedom, constitutes the focus of Hegel's considerations. The purpose of the civil society is to satisfy the needs in a "stable and universal way, videlicet to secure this satisfaction" (Hegel 1991: § 533). Hegel certainly does not identify the civil society with the sphere of modern economy. Civil society is a figure of right as the existence of freedom; solely as a moment of the existence of freedom is the modern economy itself possible regarding its rationality, that is to say, possible as a rational expression of modern subjectivity.

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Freedom's functional moments determine the course of Hegel's conceptual development. Hegel addresses the relevance the various figures of objective spirit have for freedom (their 'right' as existence of freedom). Organization theory, by contrast, is interested in the inner arrangement of an objective-spiritual figure in conformity with the idea of utility, understood as efficiency and effectivity of conscious purpose-actualization. This not only marks a difference to the relevant perspective of knowledge. The perspective of knowledge of organization theory also differs from that of economics.

Economics in particular plays an important role for Hegel's elaborations on the system of needs. Under the title of "system of needs" he deals with themes like needs and their satisfaction, labor and optimizing its productivity, assets (*Vermögen*) and the economic division in the form of estates (*Stände*) related to it, in short, economic constellations. Here, humans are to some extent conceived of as a utility factor, as in the context of need satisfaction, the tendency to increase the abstract character of labor (specialization of production processes and division of labor) leads the "dependencies" and "inter-relations" of humans into "total necessity" (Hegel 1955: § 198), and hence, into "unconditioned dependency" of the societal context (Hegel 1991: § 526).

Both economics and organization theory are concerned with optimizing welfare, and thereby with 'utility' too; yet, their respective subject matter

differs: organization theory is bothered with the organizational aspect, economics with the economic aspect. The organizational aspect concerns the form of social units in which purposes are actualized. Basically, 'sociological' points of view guide the concern. The economic dimension is a specification of this form of actualizing purposes. In contrast to organization theory, economics (*Volkswirtschaftslehre*) deals with, as it is put today, macro-economic and micro-economic issues.

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The highlighted differences can be formalized as follows. Economy itself is a *figure* (shape) of objective spirit, or more precisely, of *Sittlichkeit*, whereas organization only concerns a formal *aspect* of this figure: the orientation towards the cooperative actualization of the purposes of economic behavior. Organizations as phenomena of spirit, therefore, only exist as commercial enterprises, state enterprises, bureaucracies, and so forth. As a consequence, organization does not coincide with any of Hegel's spheres of objective spirit. By contrast, organization concerns a *subsequent theme*. The place to expose this theme is Hegel's 'system of needs'. Organization in itself relates to *Sittlichkeit* as such, as the normativity we are living in and the condition of actualizing determined purposes. Organization is effective throughout. However, with regard to the two determinations of purpose-determinacy and formalization, which are guiding for the concept of organization of organization theory, organization as an issue should be addressed subsequent to the satisfaction of needs in the system of needs.

Concerning Hegel's concept of the state, this implies two different matters to pay attention to: a negative one and a positive one.

The place to expose the *concept* of organization is not identical with the place the *term* occurs prominently in Hegel's philosophy of spirit, that is, in the elaborations of the (substantial, political) state. For Hegel, organization concerns the actual structure or differentiation of a figure of spirit that is entirely free—a free organization of free beings. Hence, the issue at hand is the organization of freedom. Hegel's thematization of the organization of freedom, however, takes place in a specific regard that differs from that of organization theory. For organization theory, the organization of the state only makes up one specific type of organization. Moreover, organization theory is not concerned with organization as a way to structure or differentiate the state as the actualization of right, and hence, with a figure of objective spirit: organization theory is concerned with an *aspect* of this structure, differentiation, or figure.

Interestingly enough though, in Hegel's discussion of the state, and especially of constitutional law, many moments come up for discussion that qualify organization *in general*, regardless of the pursued purpose, even if Hegel addresses them only with regard to the state, and hence, with regard to

the purpose of the universal. Such moments will become determinations of the concept of organization to be exposed. In addition, they exhibit tendencies that can even be taken into account as the fundamental principles of organization.

Pursuing and actualizing particular interests requires, as a condition of its own possibility, something universal that retains and penetrates it. Organizations must have a constitution that suits their particular purpose, just as the state, as focused on the universal, has a constitution that suits its purpose. Hence, the constitution of the state as a structure that mediates between the universal and the particular, both in an objective (constitution) and a subjective (disposition) direction, concerns a specification of organization. Something universal is acknowledged consciously, and by implication, the mediating structure between singularity, particularity, and universality is too (regardless whether we can distinguish the recognized universal in the political state from the universality of arbitrary actualization of purposes). Any organization requires the recognition of some universal, penetrating an organized entity. This involves the issue of a functional division, and hence issues like the division of labor and its criteria, leadership, (ultimate) responsibility, organizational structure, centralism, hierarchy, salary, moral competence, abuse of power, corruption, etcetera (cf. Hegel 1955: §§ 287 ff.). The orientation towards the universal, as Hegel exemplifies regarding the state, can only be preserved by a purposeful division of functional units of organization that is differentiated in itself.

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### Organization in Hegel's philosophy of spirit, speculatively

It is clear, then, that we can carve out several aspects from Hegel's doctrine of *Sittlichkeit* to be considered for themselves, that is from the perspective of organization. They appear as moments of the concept of organization as such, not immediately as moments of self-knowledge of the absolute idea as absolute spirit (which is Hegel's project). These moments, in conformity with the method of a philosophical determination of reality, have to be based on both the *material* and the *logic* of the concept, or in short, on the matter itself.

Concerning the material foundation of organization, we could allusively emphasize moments of the concept of organization in Hegel's philosophy. However, an explicit thematization is absent due to the focus of Hegel's philosophy of spirit. For this reason, superordinate concepts that divide (articulate) the concept of organization and enable its material differentiation are absent too—not to mention their speculative order.

The first task, thus, is to establish superordinate concepts for the division of the concept of organization. Interestingly enough, the history of transcendental

philosophy, more in particular contemporary transcendental philosophies of the economic-social, contains potential in this respect. As mentioned already, Flach's analysis of the idea of utility is of interest here. It results in the economic-social fundamental values of economic and social profitability, sustainability, and favorability of labor. I have suggested that with these values a perspective occurs that is not addressed by Hegel. Although this perspective is related to freedom, it does not qualify objective-spiritual figures of unconditionedness on the level of unconditionedness. Actually it concerns the dimension of the inner instrumental (teleological) purposefulness of these figures, that is to say, the dimension of their inner purposive (appropriate) organization in conformity with the value of utility.

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Flach takes the principles of profitability, sustainability, and favorability into account as the fundamental values (or defining moments) of the idea of the utile, that is of the idea of the economic-social. Within the framework of a Hegelian determination of organization, however, these principles can be useful in the determination of the purposive organization of figures of objective spirit. They depict the basic material moments of Hegel's doctrine of *Sittlichkeit* regarding its relevance for organization. The triadic structure of those principles or fundamental values predisposes them to a speculative articulation in conformity with Hegel's logic of the concept.

In Flach's elaborations on the economic-social sphere, the concept of labor takes center stage (Flach 1997: 141–5), leading to the economic-social fundamental values of economic and social profitability, sustainability, and favorability of labor. The principle of *profitability* concerns the exploitation (*Verwertung*) of what is (in either way) pre-given, which is accomplished by labor. This exploitation is subjected to the purpose of "utility," which is regarded as imperative to establish "profitable relationships," (profitable in the sense of production, calculation, consumption, and welfare). In this way, a uniform spectrum of economic-social phenomena is 'constituted'. The principle of *sustainability*, then, 'regulates' these established profitable relationships to the effect that it concerns relationships that "permanently repeat themselves," and hence, relationships that "stabilize themselves." Only then is the exploitation of the given material "truly efficient." In this regard, the principle of *favorability* takes account of the fact that labor is not uniform, which is to say, labor is or should be divided on the basis of "skill" (*Geschicklichkeit*); it should 'pay off' for all participants (the individual, group(s)) in one way or another.

In order to expose the concept of organization, these three basic values or principles need to be linked with the material of Hegel's doctrine of *Sittlichkeit*. As shown above, the system of needs is the proper place to expose the concept of organization. Moreover, it also became clear that Hegel's doctrine

of the state contains numerous moments that qualify organization in general. The purpose of the civil society has been revealed as securing the satisfaction of needs in a 'stable and universal way', which involves the inclusion of moments of the state. Hegel goes on to touch upon the issue of the allocation of labor, regarding the competences of the subject, and hence the personnel allocation of labor, as well as the objective qualification of the allocation of labor (its function for actualizing freedom). And that all this should pay off for the individuals involved belongs to the disposition of Hegel's doctrine of the civil society: the civil society is about enabling individuals to pursue their own welfare according to their own opinion. The same applies to the state: its essential functions include secure welfare.

In short, the divisional concepts of the economic-social, taken from Flach's transcendental philosophy, have a material foundation in Hegel's philosophy. Articulating them speculatively involves logically modeling Flach's Kantian schematism of constitution and regulation into a relation of Hegelian universality, particularity, and singularity. As a result, the fundamental values of profitability, sustainability, and favorability would be translated into the Hegelian 'concept'. Admittedly, such a translation into the logic of the concept can only concern making it plausible that the divisional concepts mentioned are capable of being interpreted as the moments of the concept, which are the universal, particular, and singular. To develop them in terms of a logic of the concept, a logic of judgment, and a logic of inference would transcend the task and purpose of the present study: to present the place of the concept of organization in the system of philosophy, and hence, to expose it.

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First, it is an important methodological feature of a speculative philosophy that determinations do not join in 'externally': that they do not stem from an outward position but from an "immanent deduction" (Hegel 1951: 219).<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, "the concept as such" contains itself the moments of universality, particularity, and singularity (Hegel 1991: § 163); the concept is the "concrete par excellence" (Hegel 1991: § 164; cf. Arndt et al., eds. 2006; Koch et al., eds. 2003; Düsing 1986; Fulda 1978). As a result, the concept is only determined by itself, and not by any externality. Therefore, the beginning of a speculative sequence of concept development is *as* a beginning something immediate (Hegel 1951: 488). The meaning of the progress, again, is that the beginning, as the abstract universality it is, determines itself, becomes 'for itself' the universal (Hegel 1951: 490). Subsequently, the achieved result turns into a beginning again (Hegel 1951: 499). The method extends itself into a "system" of determinations of thought (Hegel 1951: 500).

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5 As it is put in the *Philosophy of Right*: "the immanent differentiation of the concept itself" (Hegel 1955: § 33 R).

Regarding specifically the *free will* as the starting concept of the philosophy of objective spirit, the free will must initially count as “immediate,” then as “reflected in itself,” and finally as the unity of both determinations, that is as “substantial” will (Hegel 1991: § 487). By implication, it contains in itself the “pure indeterminacy,” “universality” (Hegel 1955: § 5), the “transition from undifferentiated indeterminacy to differentiation and determination,” “particularization” (Hegel 1955: § 6), and the “unity of these both moments,” the “particularity that is reflected in itself, and hence, restored to universality—singularity,” veracious “self-determination” (Hegel 1955: § 7). Therefore, it contains exactly that “freedom of the will” that makes up its “concept or substantiality” (Hegel 1955: § 7). The same constellation occurs within the sphere of *Sittlichkeit*: the “substance of *Sittlichkeit* (*sittliche Substanz*)” initially is an “immediate” spirit (“family”), then a “relative totality of relative relations between individuals as independent persons in a formal universality” (“civil society”), and finally the “self-conscious substance” (“state-constitution” (Hegel 1991: § 517)), “substantial universality” (Hegel 1955: § 157).

The *civil society*, as the external state, or as Hegel also puts it, as a state of understanding, contains as its *first* moment precisely the moment that turned out to be the starting point for an exposition of the concept of organization: “The mediation of need and the satisfaction of the individual through its labor and through the work and satisfaction of the needs of all the others—the system of needs” (Hegel 1955: § 188; 1991: § 524). The ‘reflected *Sittlichkeit*’ of the external state, which is an organization as such, has

a) as its *abstract universal* determination of the beginning the determinacy that qualifies organizational phenomena in general or as such. Hence, it constitutes phenomena as organizational phenomena. This determination concerns the satisfaction of particular needs by a productive activity that is labor (cf. also Hegel 1955: § 196, and for Hegel’s concept of labor, e.g., Schmidt am Busch 2002). Labor exploits pre-given material. The formation of pre-given material by labor is subjected to the directive of *profitability*, or of “utility,” oriented towards establishing these or those “profitable relationships.”

b) This universal dimension of establishing profitable relationships is *particularized* by specifying them into relationships that “permanently repeat,” “stabilize,” “maintain,” and therefore “sublimate” themselves. The formation of pre-given material, more specifically, is hence subjected to the directive of *sustainability* of labor.

c) The *substantial unity and truth* of immediacy and reflection in itself, of abstract profitability and particular sustainability, is achieved only on the basis of a skilled allocation of labor over the individuals (and, of course, by the respective execution). The principle of *favorability* of labor assures that the



effort 'pays off', that labor is self-determined labor, and hence, that labor is actual establishment of profitable relationships.

As a result, we have reached the idea in its universal existence in and for itself, to be more precise, the idea of *organization*.

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## Kristijan Krajnen

### Sama ideja organizacije: ka hegelijanskom izlaganju

#### Apstrakt

Savremena debata o socijalno ontološkim osnovama organizacije, iz metodoloških razloga, nedovoljno zahvata fenomen organizacije. Početno određenje organizacije ostaje pretpostavljeno. Da bi se ovo implicitno značenje – toga šta organizacija jeste – učinilo eksplicitnim, potrebna je drugačija, obuhvatnija i temeljnija metodologija. Filozofija nemačkog idealizma pruža veoma moćnu metodologiju. Međutim, u filozofiji nemačkog idealizma od Kanta do Hegela, neo-kantijanizma, pa sve do savremene transcendentalne filozofije, ideja organizacije nije obrađivana. Odista, izazov je konstruisati ideju organizacije iz tako idealističke perspektive: perspektive razuma i, uz to, slobode. Ovo nam pruža novi okvir za bavljenje organizacijom u teoriji i praksi. Članak konstruiše ideju organizacije (i drži se toga da i dalje ima smisla to raditi) unutar okvira G. V. F. Hegela. Pokazuje gde bi, topološki gledano, problemi organizacije trebalo da se obrađuju u Hegelovom filozofskom sistemu i, stoga, šta se ovde pokazuje da organizacija jeste spekulativno.

**Ključne reči:** socijalna ontologija, organizacija, Hegel, transcendentalna filozofija, filozofija društvenih nauka