

The logical course of history. Ferdinand Lassalle and late Hegelianism¹

El curso lógico de la historia. Ferdinand Lassalle y el hegelianismo tardío.

ABSTRACT: The paper discusses Ferdinand Lassalle's (1825–64) activities in the Philosophical Society of Berlin (Philosophische Gesellschaft zu Berlin). The society was founded in 1843 by some former students of G.W.F. Hegel. Lassalle joined the society soon after he had published his work on the philosophy of Heraclitus. The paper focuses on two talks, which Lassalle gave at the meetings of the society. The first talk (1859) elaborates Karl Rosenkranz' work on Hegel's logic. The other talk (1862) thematizes J.G. Fichte's philosophy and his significance for German nationalism. I argue that there is a continuum between the two talks. In the first talk Lassalle provides his definition for the logical course of history, which he then exemplifies in the case of Germany in the second talk.

KEYWORDS: FERDINAND LASSALLE; HEGELIANISM; PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY; J.G. FICHTE; KARL ROSENKRANZ.

RESUMEN: El artículo analiza las actividades de Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-1864) en la Sociedad Filosófica de Berlín (Philosophische Gesellschaft zu Berlin). La sociedad fue fundada en 1843 por algunos antiguos alumnos de G.W.F. Hegel. Lassalle se unió a la sociedad poco después de publicar su obra sobre la filosofía de Heráclito. El artículo se centra en dos charlas que Lassalle dio en las reuniones de la sociedad. La primera charla (1859) profundiza en la obra de Karl Rosenkranz sobre la lógica de Hegel. La otra charla (1862) trata sobre la filosofía de J.G. Fichte y su importancia para el nacionalismo alemán. Sostengo que existe una continuidad entre ambas conferencias. En la primera, Lassalle ofrece su definición del curso lógico de la historia, que luego ejemplifica con el caso de Alemania en la segunda.

PALABRAS CLAVE: FERDINAND LASSALLE; HEGELIANISMO; FILOSOFÍA DE LA HISTORIA; J. G. FICHTE; KARL ROSENKRANZ.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Besides Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, yet another key figure in the early socialism, Ferdinand Lassalle (1825–64), was studying Hegel in Berlin in the first half of the 1840s. He is remembered as the founder of the first organized worker's movement in Germany (*Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein*). His relation to Hegel and Hegelianism turned out to be notably different than Marx' or Engels'.¹

In this paper I focus on Lassalle's activities in the Philosophical Society of Berlin (*Philosophische Gesellschaft zu Berlin*; from now on PGB), founded in 1843 by some former students of Hegel. Elaborating Lassalle's activities in the society is intriguing because of the peculiar character of his philosophical career. It is evident that he had a real talent for philosophy (see the next chapter). E.g., before his unexpected passing he published two extensive works on philosophical issues, which were acknowledged by notable academics of the time (like, e.g., Alexander von Humboldt). Yet, Lassalle never had a formal position at the university.² He was occasionally called "Doctor Lassalle", but in reality, he had no doctorate.³

Thus, Lassalle's association with the Berlin society for approximately three years (1859–62) was his main appearance on the scientific stage. In this paper, I discuss two talks by Lassalle at the PGB meetings. The first talk (1859; HRL; chapter IV) is about Hegel's logic, the second (1862; PF; chapter V) about J.G. Fichte's philosophy. I argue that there is a continuum between these two talks. I defend the thesis that in the first talk Lassalle provides his definition for the logical course of history, which he then exemplifies in the case of Germany in the second talk.

II. LASSALLE'S PHILOSOPHICAL CAREER

Roughly speaking, Lassalle's philosophical career splits into two periods. Between 1843–46 Lassalle studied philosophy, and particularly Hegel's philosophy, intensively.⁴ The first period was interrupted due to his involvement with both a lawsuit (the Hatzfeldt case) and politics. The political activities

[1] T. RAMM, „Ferdinand Lassalle“, in B. Heidenreich (ed.) *Politische Theorien des 19. Jahrhunderts. Konservatismus, Liberalismus, Sozialismus*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002, p. 502; W. MOOG, *Hegel und die Hegelsche Schule*. München: Ernst Reinhardt, 1930, pp. 468, 473.

[2] RAMM, „Ferdinand“, p. 487; L.J. HUFF, „Ferdinand Lassalle“, *Political Science Quarterly* 2 (3) (1887), p. 417.

[3] E.g., G. BRANDES, *Ferdinand Lassalle*. London: Heinemann, 1911, p. 195; H.J. FRIEDERICI, *Ferdinand Lassalle. Eine politische Biografie*. Berlin: Dietz, 1985, p. 71. Lassalle's work *Heraclitus* (see the next chapter) was meant to be his dissertation.

[4] FRIEDERICI, *Ferdinand Lassalle*, p. 17.

also led to his imprisonment. The second period began around the mid-1850s. It was a time of great productivity. Yet, since the early 1860s until Lassalle's unexpected passing in August 1864, the political activities took again priority over philosophy.

During the first period Lassalle published almost nothing. He began his studies at the University of Breslau, but he also stayed in Berlin both in 1844 and in 1845. The more Lassalle learned about Hegel, the more he became convinced of it. At the mid-1840s Lassalle's stance to Hegel was the opposite of Marx' and Engels' (5–7 years older than Lassalle): they were about “[...] ‘to overcome’ Hegel [...]” at the same time.⁵ It is telling that in Berlin Lassalle heard a lecture of Hegel's loyal student and successor G.A. Gabler, but he was so disappointed at Gabler's performance that he never returned to his lectures!⁶

The appearance of the Lassalle's work on Heraclitus (*Die Philosophie Herakleitos des Dunklen von Ephesos (Heraclitus the Dark)*) in 1858 was a small sensation and put his name on the map.⁷ It presented a comprehensive Hegelian reading of Heraclitus. It was peculiar though that Lassalle had begun writing the work already 13 years earlier. Back then Hegel's status was different. Yet, Lassalle did not change the plan for his work.⁸ It was praised, par excellence, for its careful examination of the sources, not for its Hegelian approach.

Lassalle's intellectual identity changed during the years his work on Heraclitus was interrupted: the academic career began to appear less interesting.⁹ He was never able to repeat the success of his first major work. The reception of his next major work, *Das System der erworbenen Rechte (The System of vested Rights; 1861)*, which thematized jurisprudence, legal history and philosophy of right, was rather lukewarm.¹⁰ Like the Heraclitus work, the second work included Hegelian elements as well.¹¹

All in all, Lassalle devoted somewhat ten years of his life to philosophy.¹² His achievements in philosophy are not minor: his major works alone consist of more than 2000 pages. Yet, he finally decided to prefer politics to philosophy. In part because of this, he has occasionally been excluded from the history of late Hegelianism.

[5] Ibid., p. 17; „[...] Hegel zu ‚überwinden‘ [...]“.

[6] Ibid., p. 20.

[7] Ibid., p. 69.

[8] BRANDES, *Ferdinand Lassalle*, pp. 32, 34.

[9] HUFF, „Ferdinand“, p. 419.

[10] FRIEDERICI, *Ferdinand Lassalle*, p. 98.

[11] RAMM, „Ferdinand“, p. 495; MOOG, *Hegel*, p. 478; BRANDES, *Ferdinand Lassalle*, pp. 57–58.

[12] FRIEDERICI, *Ferdinand Lassalle*, p. 119.

III. LASSALLE AND THE BERLIN SOCIETY

In the aftermath of the publication of his Heraclitus work, Lassalle was invited to join the Philosophical Society of Berlin.¹³ He was definitely one of the key members of the society at the turn of the 1850s–1860s.¹⁴ He participated actively into discussions on various topics and he was mentioned as one of the collaborators (*Mitarbeiter*) of the journal *Der Gedanke*, the organ of the PGB. Both his major works were discussed at the meetings and in the journal *Der Gedanke*.

In January 1859, Lassalle presented a talk about Karl Rosenkranz' magnum opus, *Wissenschaft der logischen Idee* (*Science of the logical Idea*; 1858–59). It was rather bold: Rosenkranz, who knew Hegel personally, had had a long and distinguished career.¹⁵ Yet, Lassalle argued that in his work he forsakes the very core of Hegel's philosophy.¹⁶ In May 1862, Lassalle's gave a speech on the centenary of J.G. Fichte. Lassalle was asked to give the speech probably because he had thematized Fichte in detail earlier. In fact, he was the first to stress Fichte's significance for the German socialist movement.¹⁷ In 1860 Lassalle published a selection of Fichte's political fragments with commentary (*Fichtes politisches Vermächtnis* ("Fichte's political legacy")).¹⁸

Lassalle's 1862 speech is the main focus of this paper. Probably the PGB members had high expectations for Lassalle's speech because the influential Hegel-critic, professor F.A. Trendelenburg, was chosen to give a speech about Fichte at the University of Berlin on the same day.¹⁹ Lassalle took the task seriously: his two-hour speech was more ambitious than a typical celebratory

[13] BRANDES, *Ferdinand Lassalle*, p. 155.

[14] C.L. MICHELET, „Geschichte der Philosophischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin“, *Der Gedanke. Philosophische Zeitschrift*, 1 (1–3) (1861), pp. 243–4; C.L. MICHELET, „Geschichte der Philosophischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin. Zweiter Theil“, *Der Gedanke. Fliegende Blätter in zwanglosen Heften*, Bd. 8 (4) (1873), pp. 266–8.

[15] F. LASSALLE, „Die Hegel'sche und die Rosenkranz'sche Logik und die Grundlage der Hegel'schen Geschichtsphilosophie im Hegel'schen System“ in *Der Gedanke*, 1 (5) (Band 2.) (1861), p. 124. From now on HRL.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 125; MOOG, *Hegel*, p. 427.

[17] D. BREAZEALE, „Introduction. On Situating and Interpreting Fichte's Addresses to the German Nation“ in D. BREAZEALE & T. ROCKMORE (eds.), *Fichte's Addresses to the German Nation Reconsidered*, New York: SUNY Press, 2016, p. 10.

[18] About the origin and background of these fragments, see F. LASSALLE, „Fichtes politisches Vermächtnis und die neueste Gegenwart“ (1860), in E. BERNSTEIN (ed.) *Gesammelte Reden und Schriften* 6. Berlin: Paul Cassirer, 1919, pp. 69–70. From now on FV.

[19] A. TRENDLENBURG, *Zur Erinnerung an Johann Gottlieb Fichte*. Berlin: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1862; MICHELET, „Geschichte. Zweiter Theil“, p. 277; A.J. NORAS, *Geschichte des Neukantianismus*. Berlin: Peter Lang, 2020, p. 590; *Der Gedanke* (2 (2–3) (Bd. 3.)), pp. 129, 216.

speech. In fact, in Lassalle's speech Fichte's personality and achievements are secondary to "the spirit of Fichte", very broadly understood.²⁰ In fact, the speech is not a commentary of Fichte in the first place. That is not to say that Lassalle's speech lacks quotations from Fichte but that Lassalle interprets these quotations rather straightforwardly to support his own views.

I do not argue that Lassalle's speech could not be read as a Fichte commentary. As Aichele has pointed out, Lassalle's reading of Fichte is in fact more accurate than Heinrich von Treitschke's, another Fichte commentator of the early 1860s.²¹ My point is rather that the commentary of Fichte is only one possible reading of Lassalle's speech. Besides a commentary of Fichte, it is at least as much a statement of Lassalle's own views.

The speech raised a storm of protests at the meeting. Later it met with little response. The speech was neither published (like Lassalle's Rosenkranz talk) nor discussed in the journal *Der Gedanke*. It was published as a separate booklet in Berlin independently of the PGB.²² The report of the Fichte celebration in *Der Gedanke*, does not even mention Lassalle's name.²³ In the history of the society the speech is mentioned only in passing.²⁴ First after 57 years Lassalle was again at the center of attention in the society: Max Runze had a talk on Lassalle in 31 May 1919.²⁵

In the aftermath of his Fichte speech, on 31 May 1862, Lassalle left the society.²⁶ At the end of the paper, I elaborate the reasons to the negative reception to Lassalle's speech. First (chapter IV), I discuss Lassalle's Rosenkranz talk and its views about the philosophy of history. Then (chapter V) I move on to the Fichte speech.

[20] F. LASSALLE, „Die Philosophie Fichte's und die Bedeutung des Deutschen Volksgeistes“ (1862), in E. Bernstein (ed.), *Gesammelte Reden und Schriften* 6. Berlin: Paul Cassirer, 1919, pp. 112–113. From now on PF.

[21] AICHELE, „Einleitung“, p. LXXXV.

[22] F. LASSALLE, *Die Philosophie Fichte's und die Bedeutung des Deutschen Volksgeistes*. Berlin: G. Jansen, 1862.

[23] „Die Fichtefeier“ in *Der Gedanke*, 2 (1) (Bd. 3.) (1862), pp. 197–199. Lassalle's speech was noticed in *Königlich privilegierte Berlinische Zeitung von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen* No. 117 (21 May 1862).

[24] MICHELET, „Geschichte. Zweiter Theil“, p. 277.

[25] *Philosophische Gesellschaft zu Berlin. Sitzungsberichte 1919*. Langensalza: Julius Beltz, 1919, pp. 6–8.

[26] FRIEDERICI, *Ferdinand Lassalle*, p. 119; MICHELET 1873, p. 265. MICHELET (1873, p. 285) claims that Lassalle left the society due to his critique of Lassalle's second major work.

IV. LOGIC AND HISTORY

The subject of Lassalle's criticism, Rosenkranz' two-volume work *The Science of the Logical Idea*, is a noteworthy piece of the 19th century Hegel literature: it is probably the most significant attempt to reform Hegel's logic by Hegel's contemporaries. This was acknowledged also by the PGB members: besides Lassalle, the key figure of the society, C.L. Michelet reviewed Rosenkranz' work.²⁷

Worth noting is that the latter volume of Rosenkranz' work was not yet available at the time of Lassalle's speech.²⁸ Those categories of logic, which are the center of attention in Lassalle's talk, were elaborated first in the latter volume. Hence, Lassalle formed his opinion about Rosenkranz' reading of these categories for the most part just on the basis of the introduction of the work!²⁹

IV.1. LASSALLE'S CRITIQUE OF ROSENKRANZ

Concerning the topic of this paper, there is no need to expand on Lassalle's critique of Rosenkranz' logic. His main argument against Rosenkranz' is as follows. Rosenkranz changes the structure of the last part of Hegel's logic (the subjective logic) and its middle section in particular.³⁰ He omits the categories of mechanism and chemism, because they belong just to the realm of nature.³¹ Moreover, he moves the category of purpose (*Zweck*) to a previous part of logic.³²

These changes may not seem grave.³³ Yet, Lassalle claims that because of these changes Hegel's logic falls down. First of all, the idea of omitting categories from Hegel's logic is absurd. In Hegel's logic the relations between categories are necessary.³⁴ So, how can it be that Rosenkranz omits categories or changes their places? At least Rosenkranz has not argued that there would be mistakes in the proper sense of the word in Hegel's logic.³⁵ Lassalle argues that Rosenkranz' logic is rather descriptive than dialectical.³⁶ That is, Rosenkranz

[27] HRL, pp. 123–4; MOOG, *Hegel*, p. 427.

[28] K. ROSENKRANZ, *Wissenschaft der logischen Idee. 1r Theil. Metaphysik*. Königsberg: Gebrüder Bornträger, 1858, p. XXXX.

[29] HRL, p. 124; ROSENKRANZ, *Wissenschaft*, pp. 1–103.

[30] HRL, p. 126.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 131, 143; ROSENKRANZ, *Wissenschaft*, pp. 26–7, 32.

[32] ROSENKRANZ, *Wissenschaft*, pp. 25, 32, 110.

[33] HRL, pp. 125, 136; C.L. MICHELET, „Geschichte der Philosophischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin“, *Verhandlungen der Philosophischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin*, 10–11 (1878), p. 21.

[34] HRL, p. 149.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 130.

[36] *Ibid.*, pp. 125–6. MICHELET („Geschichte“ (1878), p. 20) agrees with Lassalle's argument.

merely presents a number of categories, whose relations to each other are merely artificial (*künstlich*).

Moreover, Rosenkranz' reform is unacceptable, since the middle part of the subjective logic is necessary for the movement from the concept to the idea. The middle part is titled "objectivity", and without it Rosenkranz' logic provides just the subjective or the formal idea.³⁷ Thus, the idea in Rosenkranz' logic is not the same as in Hegel's. For Hegel, the idea is the unity (*Einheit*) of the concept and the objectivity.

Lassalle concludes that Rosenkranz' logic is not similar but yet analogue to Immanuel Kant's logic.³⁸ The Kantian character of Rosenkranz' logic is that metaphysics and logic, or being and thinking, are again as distinct as they are in Kant's logic. It was Kant's merit to demonstrate that metaphysics and logic are distinct but yet related to each other. But it was first Hegel, who turned this negative result into the positive result: metaphysics and logic are identical.

From a historical perspective, it is remarkable that Lassalle describes Rosenkranz' standpoint as "neo-Kantianism" (*Neo-Kantianismus*).³⁹ Lassalle's work is thus one of the first to introduce this concept.⁴⁰

IV.2. LOGICAL PROCESSES IN HISTORY

After criticizing Rosenkranz' reform of logic, Lassalle discusses the implications of this reform for Hegel's philosophy of history. In the paragraphs about the philosophy of history,⁴¹ he does not in fact address Rosenkranz anymore, but rather elaborates his own understanding of the logical process of history.

Lassalle claims that Rosenkranz' reform has negative implications not only for philosophy of history but also for other areas of philosophy. For example, Rosenkranz' reform breaks down the identity of logic and metaphysics.⁴² Lassalle's choice to focus on the philosophy of history is not yet arbitrary: he mentions three reasons to choose the philosophy of history. First, the history is "[...] the realm of the idea [...]"⁴³ Second, Lassalle argues that so far, the relation between Hegel's logic and his conception of history has not been explicated.⁴⁴ Lassalle shall provide the definition of this relation. Third, the definition of the

[37] HRL, pp. 136–7.

[38] Ibid., pp. 144–5; MOOG, *Hegel*, p. 474.

[39] HRL, p. 147; MICHELET, „Geschichte“ (1878), p. 22.

[40] L. KALLIO, "The 1860s Kant revival and the Philosophical Society of Berlin", *Kant e-Prints* 15 (3) (2020), p. 195; NORAS, *Geschichte*, pp. 25–6.

[41] HRL, pp. 138–143.

[42] Ibid., pp. 144–9; MICHELET, „Geschichte“ (1878), pp. 21–2.

[43] HRL, p. 139; „[...] das Reich der Idee“.

[44] Ibid., pp. 138–9.

concept of history – the history as the objective self-realization of the concept (*die objective Selbstverwirklichung des Begriffs*) – is one the most significant outcomes of Hegel's philosophy.

Lassalle's main thesis is that the place of history in Hegel's logic is to be found in the categories of objectivity (mechanism, chemism, teleology), or just those categories, whose status was changed by Rosenkranz. Lassalle and Rosenkranz agree that all those categories, which belong both to nature and to spirit, belong also to logic.⁴⁵ Lassalle argues that mechanism, chemism and teleology are such categories. There is, e.g., logical chemism and spiritual chemism. The latter encompasses the chemical processes in the realm of history. Rosenkranz is wrong in postulating chemism just in the natural realm.

Lassalle takes the relationship between logic and history to be remarkably close.⁴⁶ Logic is immanent in the course of history; history must have its ultimate foundation and origin (*letzte Grundlage und Wurzel*) in the logic.⁴⁷ In order to demonstrate, how logical mechanism, chemism and teleology (Lassalle uses the term "purposive activity" (*Zwecktätigkeit*) too) are immanent in the course of history, Lassalle presents a variety of examples. Given the topic of his Fichte speech, I focus next on the examples.

Lassalle's examples of the mechanical processes in the history are very concise, and besides, he makes no references to logic. E.g., the description of the mechanical process in the development, which began with the collapse of the feudal system and led to the French Revolution, is boiled down to one sentence.⁴⁸ Lassalle claims that the realization of the ideals of the Revolution (e.g., civil rights) was made possible through the redistribution of land. Another example is about the economic development in England at the time. Due to the concentration of the capital, the middle class has gradually diminished and the proletariat class has increased. So, in the mechanical processes, the elements (e.g., social classes) have external relations to each other. As one element increases, another element decreases. But the essences of these elements do not change. This corresponds to Lassalle's definition of the mechanical process in logic: it is the movement of objects, whose relation to each other is external and indifferent (*gleichgültig*).⁴⁹

Lassalle argues that comprehending the presence of chemism in history is most challenging. Yet, it is crucial, since the logical chemism "[...] mainly

[45] Ibid., p. 131; MOOG, *Hegel*, p. 475; ROSENKRANZ, *Wissenschaft*, pp. 102–3.

[46] MOOG, *Hegel*, pp. 477–8.

[47] HRL, p. 138.

[48] Ibid., pp. 139–140.

[49] Ibid., pp. 126, 130.

constitutes the soul of history [...]”.⁵⁰ Lassalle defines logical chemism as follows. An object is the totality of the concept in itself. This totality yet exists only through its one-sided relations to other objects. Thus, there is a tension between the existence of the object and the nature (*Natur*) of the object as totality. A chemical object is thus in itself contradictory.⁵¹ The movement of chemism emerges in attempt to sublimate this tension.

As an example of the movement of chemism in history, Lassalle takes up a nation, which aims at world domination (here he has at least the Roman Empire and Napoleon’s France in mind).⁵² A nation like this strives for subjugation (*Unterwerfung*) of other nations, that is a nation like this strives to give an exclusive authority to its national principles. If this nation succeeds in subjugating the others, its national character eventually weakens. This is because the national character was based on the tension to other nations. The difference to other nations constituted the character of a nation, but as the dominant nation it does not acknowledge the national differences anymore. Thus, the national character turns into neutral cosmopolitanism.

Now, the result is that a tension emerges between the initial goal of the nation (the dominance of its national principles) and the result of its actions (neutral cosmopolitanism). This tension leads to the dissolution of the world dominance and the differences between the nations surface again.

Lassalle argues that as the result of the chemical process the tension of the chemical object vanishes and a new product emerges.⁵³ The result of the chemical process is a higher determination of the concept (*Begriffsbestimmung*). That is, the concept becomes free. This indicates that a nation, which loses its world dominance, neither returns to its previous stage nor declines. On the opposite, it becomes internally stronger.

Lassalle mentions just one example of teleology in history.⁵⁴ The individuals and collectives, which overwhelmed the government in the French Revolution, had various purposes. Some purposes (like wealth or political power) were concrete or external (*äusserlich*). Yet, the course of the French revolution was not determined by these purposes. In fact, the struggle for the external purposes, was nothing but an instrument of the eternal purpose (*der unendliche Zweck*), that is the idea. Thus, the actors of the Revolution were unconsciously advancing also other purposes than their own. Yet, some actors of the Revolu-

[50] Ibid., p. 140; „[...] hauptsächlich die Seele der Geschichte ausmacht [...]“ (in the original, the words are spaced).

[51] Ibid., pp. 128–9.

[52] Ibid., pp. 140–1; Moog, *Hegel*, p. 476.

[53] HRL, p. 129.

[54] Ibid., p. 143.

tion were conscious of the fact that they “[...] are just the instruments of the idea [...]”.⁵⁵ The actions of these actors are in themselves the actions (*Tätigkeit*) of the idea of the good.⁵⁶

Lassalle makes no comparison between logical teleology and the course of Revolution. There is though clearly affinity between them. Logical teleology is defined by freedom. In the mechanical and in the chemical realm an object is determined by the external reality, whereas in the realm of teleology, an object realizes itself in the external reality.⁵⁷ In the Revolution too, free actors strived to realize their own purposes. They used various instruments (e.g., political power) to realize their purposes. Yet, the actors could have chosen also other instruments. They had the freedom of choice.

Lassalle's examples raise several questions. First, it is unclear to what extent the historical events can be explained through logic. E.g., nations are identified with logical concepts. Accordingly, the relations between nations, dissolution of empires and so on can be explained through logic. Yet, the examples of the French Revolution imply that there are logical explanations also for other kinds of historical developments. Lassalle also mentions that he could present more concrete examples of the logic in history.⁵⁸ But how concrete?

Second, for some reason, Lassalle does not present a single example, which would include mechanical, chemical and teleological movements. That is, he does not bring up a series of historical events, in which a mechanical process is followed first by a chemical and then by a teleological movement. Lassalle maintains against Rosenkranz that the relations between logical categories are essentially necessary. It is thus necessary that a mechanical process takes place before a chemical process. He mentions the Revolutionary France in several examples. But he rather describes separate logical processes in different times and occasions.

Third, given that the course of history is logical, one asks, whether it is actually possible to predict the course of history? This is what Lassalle implies: as mentioned, the collapse of world dominance is logically predetermined. In this regard, he brings up Fichte. Lassalle makes the bold claim that in his *Addresses to the German Nation* (*Reden an die deutsche Nation*; 1808) Fichte was able to predict (*vorhersagen*) the fall of Napoleon's reign on the basis of reasons, which eventually stem from logical chemism!⁵⁹

[55] Ibid., p. 143; „[...] nur Mittel für die Idee zu sein [...]“.

[56] Moog, Hegel, p. 477.

[57] HRL, p. 129.

[58] Ibid., p. 143.

[59] Ibid., p. 141. Fichte's prediction is mentioned in Lassalle's later speech too (PF, pp. 137–8).

In order to see, how Lassalle comprehends the logical course of history in the case of Germany, I will next move on to explain his Fichte speech.

V. GERMAN NATION AND ITS HISTORY.

Lassalle's Fichte speech thematizes several topics. The structure of the speech is roughly the following: 1. Discussion of the recent history of philosophy 2. The national trait (*nationaler Zug*) from Kant to Hegel, or the presence of the national spirit (*Volksgeist*) in Kant and in German idealism 3. The philosophy of history in Fichte's popular philosophy (*Popularphilosophie*) 4. The mission of the German nation. Among Fichte's works, Lassalle focuses mainly on the *Addresses to the German Nation*.

V.1. NATION AND PHILOSOPHY

Lassalle's paper is built on the idea of the inseparability of philosophy and its historical framework. That is, philosophy is always dependent on the general spirit of the age.⁶⁰ Thus, philosophy does not principally differ, e.g., from the church, which also mirrors its age. Philosophy gives the highest expression of the spirit though. This is why in celebrating a remarkable philosopher (like Fichte), the nation also celebrates itself.⁶¹

To say that philosophy expresses the spirit of the age suggests that the development of philosophy is dependent on the general course of history. Lassalle exemplifies this by discussing the difference between German and French philosophy. The age of empiricism (17th and 18th century) was common for both. The two nations responded to empiricism in different ways, and thus France became the nation of practical idealism and Germany the nation of theoretical idealism.⁶² The difference between the German and the French philosophy is not big but yet decisive. The reason for the divergent paths of the Germans and the French are not to be found in the theoretical disputes but rather in the destinies of these nations. In this context Lassalle does not define the content of this destiny, but later he stresses the uniqueness of the German nation.

The ways of the Germans and the French parted, as the age of criticism began. The champion of criticism, that is Kant, laid the foundation for all future German philosophy. In the age of criticism, Germans turned inwards. Instead of the objective world, the cognitive capacity became the object of inquiry. Lassalle argues that metaphysical thinking distinguishes the Germans from

[60] PF, p. 118.

[61] Ibid., p. 114.

[62] Ibid., p. 119.

the French and from the British.⁶³ It is essential for the Germans to grasp the reality through the deepest possible understanding of the spirit. Through the most complete theoretical definition of the spirit, it would be possible to find reconciliation between the spirit and the reality.

V.2. GERMAN PHILOSOPHY AND THE SELF-UNDERSTANDING OF THE GERMAN NATION

It is Lassalle's view that philosophers are necessarily bound to their time and thus the course of the history of philosophy is dependent on the general course of history. Next, he defines the internal development of philosophy.

According to Lassalle, notable philosophers capture the significance of their predecessors.⁶⁴ The expression of predecessor's leading ideas is yet already a new idea. Thus, philosophy proceeds. Lassalle's eventual thesis is radical: the significance of every philosopher can be crystallized into one single sentence (*Satz*)! His point is that a reflection of such sentence leads to an antithesis of this sentence. Thus, the one sentence opens up to other sentences.

It is Lassalle's view that a philosopher cannot him- or herself estimate the significance of his or her own achievements.⁶⁵ The case of Fichte is a perfect example of this. Namely, Fichte himself stressed that his philosophy just develops Kant's ideas further.⁶⁶ Yet, for further generations it is clear that Fichte already departed from Kant and developed a standpoint of his own. Fichte himself recognized that later, but not at the same time as he wrote his first works. And the contemporary philosophers see – so Lassalle – that Fichte's philosophy already included the very core of Hegel's philosophy: the identity of subject and object as the movement of the absolute, or spirit.⁶⁷ Lassalle's argument here corresponds to his argument in the Rosenkranz talk: Fichte's prediction of the fall of Napoleon's France was correct, because it was based on the movement of logical chemism. Yet, Hegel was the first to formulate this movement in his logic.

Even though Lassalle recognizes the significance of Fichte's philosophy of history in his Rosenkranz talk, he describes Kant's and Hegel's philosophical revolution without mentioning Fichte at all.⁶⁸ Lassalle explains that Kant and

[63] Ibid., pp. 134–5.

[64] Ibid., p. 123.

[65] Ibid., pp. 127–9.

[66] J.G. FICHTE, *Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre*, in Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. I, 4. Eds. REINHARD LAUTH & HANS JACOB, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann, 1964ff, pp. 221–7. Cf. D. HÜBNER, *Die Geschichtsphilosophie des deutschen Idealismus. Kant–Fichte–Schelling–Hegel*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2011, p. 53.

[67] PF, pp. 132–3.

[68] HRL, pp. 137, 144–5.

Hegel revolutionized the understanding of the relation between logic and metaphysics. Schelling was the mediator between the two. Yet Fichte is not mentioned. This implies that Fichte rather anticipated some ideas of Hegel but had no standpoint of his own. On the contrary, in his later speech Lassalle regards Fichte as a pivotal figure in the history of German philosophy. Yet, he only mentions Schelling, who shared the same fundamental conception of philosophy of history with Fichte and Hegel,⁶⁹ in passing. He does not explain, why he prefers Fichte to Schelling. They both influenced Hegel's philosophy of history.

Lassalle's discussion of the history of philosophy ends up with the claim that he has now defined the spirit of Fichte's spirit, or the impelling principle (*das treibende Gesetz*) of his philosophy. Given that philosophy gives the highest expression of the spirit of an era, there should be a common expression of the spirit among the quartet Kant-Fichte-Schelling-Hegel. This is what Lassalle argues: the same national trait, which begins with Kant, continues in Fichte, in Schelling and in Hegel.⁷⁰ Or, every member of the quartet is a shape of the one and the same German national spirit. Through these shapes the spirit reaches even higher levels of self-understanding.

How about Fichte's role within this quartet? What was his explicit contribution to the self-understanding of the German national spirit? I argue that Lassalle's answer to this question is the crux of his speech. He defends the thesis that the scientific community, Hegel included, has misjudged Fichte's popular philosophy. This part of Lassalle's speech particularly provoked the Berlin audience.⁷¹

Lassalle claims to demonstrate that Fichte's popular philosophy (his *Addresses* and some other works) includes the first truthful principle of philosophy of history.⁷² This principle corresponds to Hegel's concept of history according to which the history is the progression of humanity towards freedom.

Similarly to his Rosenkranz talk, Lassalle argues that the progression of history is essentially reasonable (*vernünftig*).⁷³ The progression falls into necessary phases and eras and it has both temporal and geographical sides. Every nation has a necessary role in the progression towards freedom. German nation enjoys a special position as the bearer of the concept (*Träger des Begriffs*)

[69] HÜBNER, *Geschichtsphilosophie*, p. 12.

[70] PF, p. 134; AICHELE, „Einleitung“, p. LXXXVI.

[71] *Königlich privilegierte Berlinische Zeitung von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen* No. 117.

[72] PF, p. 138.

[73] PF, pp. 139–140; AICHELE, „Einleitung“, p. LXXXVII.

though.⁷⁴ That is, Germany shall be the nation, which realizes the realm of the consummate (*vollendet*) freedom.

The essential question is now, why the German nation and not some other has the special position. Lassalle adopts Fichte's famous argument, influenced both by J.G. Herder and A.W. Schlegel,⁷⁵ according to which the German language is a primordial language (*Ursprache*).⁷⁶ Lassalle does not elaborate this argument further. In short, Fichte argues in his *Addresses* that the German language is fundamentally different to the "dead" South European languages, which originate from the ancient languages. The question of the language is crucial, because the language is very significant for the constitution of a nation. A nation is not bound to a certain soil and in fact, a nation can move to another soil and to another climate. But changing the native language is much more significant.

Lassalle argues that the native language separates Germans from the French and from the British. Yet, there are also other nations, whose language is as primordial as the German language. Thus, the language as such does not constitute the specific nature of the German nation.

V.3 NATION'S EXISTENCE BEYOND STATE

For Lassalle's argumentation it is of utmost importance that the realm of freedom lies in the future: the existing conditions in the German states are very distinct from the realm of consummate freedom. A truly free nation must also be internally free.⁷⁷ A free nation allows personal freedom; slaves do not constitute a nation. A free nation cannot be subjugated, because the members of this nation would never allow that. Lassalle regards the existing German states, where the privileged classes rule the people, as unfree. Thus, the existence of German nation is indeed threatened. This argument is in accordance with Fichte's *Addresses*.⁷⁸ "[...] Fichte thinks that genuine national unity and the strict equality which is one of its fundamental conditions do not at present exist in the German-speaking world".⁷⁹

As argued before, thanks to the quartet of German idealism, German nation has reached a high level of self-understanding. Overcoming the tension

[74] PF, p. 142.

[75] BREAZEALE, "Introduction", pp. 4, 12.

[76] PF, p. 142; D. JAMES, *Fichte's republic. Idealism, History and Nationalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 186–7, 193; SCHÄFER, "The Ontological", p. 160; AICHELE, "Einleitung", pp. LXII–LXIII.

[77] FV, pp. 73–5.

[78] JAMES, *Fichte's republic*, pp. 173, 207.

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 201.

between being and thinking in metaphysics is *fait accompli*, but the concept of German nation is a postulate of the future, Lassalle declares.⁸⁰ Thus, the metaphysics of German idealism sets the example for the future politics in Germany.

Now, what constitutes the essence of the German nation? According to Lassalle, the specific characteristic of the German nation is that it is a nation without history.⁸¹ Contrary to France, whose national character is the result of its distinct history, the German characteristic does not stem from a common external history (*äussere Geschichte*). E.g., in a certain point of time one German state was waging a war, whereas another German state was prospering in peace.

Another factor, which separates the French from the Germans, is that the French have a state of their own. Even if there are state-like formations in Germany, Germans have not yet ever had a state. Lassalle polemizes that the borders between the German principalities (*Fürstentum*) are fundamentally arbitrary. Germans live in principalities and are thus private property (*Privatbesitz*)! No German principality has the specific right to become the German state.⁸² This is because a German principality is not a state institution (*Staatsinstitution*).

One possibility for the emergence of a nation, which Lassalle mentions briefly, is based on the territory. As the settlers landed in America, no national spirit yet existed.⁸³ However, over the course of time and through assimilation a national spirit emerged. In his earlier Fichte commentary, Lassalle made it clear though that America is not a nation but rather a civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*).⁸⁴ Because there are no other nations in the American continent, there is no need for such national unity as in Europe though. Thus, the American state does not serve as a model for Germany.

The arguments above indicate that Lassalle's definition for nation is remarkably wide. This is the case. E.g., in the discussion about nationality at the meeting of the PGB, Lassalle attempted to find the middle-ground between various narrow definitions of nationality.⁸⁵ Yet, the question remains, whether the German nation, which has neither common history, state nor territory, is a nation?

Lassalle's definition of the German nation weaves together the various arguments of his speech and brings it into the conclusion. He declares that the

[80] PF, p. 149; FV, p. 101.

[81] PF, pp. 144–5; FV, p. 88.

[82] Lassalle states this explicitly in FV, pp. 98–9.

[83] PF, p. 151.

[84] FV, p. 96 (footnote).

[85] „Ueber den Begriff der Nationalität in der Rechtsphilosophie“ in *Der Gedanke*, 1 (6) (Bd. 2.) (1861), p. 249.

German nation exists “beyond the state” (*über den Staat hinaus*).⁸⁶ The German nation exists in the spiritual realm, in which the Germans have united the internal and the external history.⁸⁷ The formation of the German nation is purely spiritual (*rein geistig*), it is a nation, which has a metaphysical destiny (*Los*).

The future task for the Germans is to bring forth (*erzeugen*) the realm of being from the realm of spirit. Lassalle thinks that the German nation is fundamentally unfree, if it does not strive for self-realization. In his earlier Fichte commentary, Lassalle argues that a group of individuals, who have, e.g., a common language and history, constitute a nation only by itself (*an sich*).⁸⁸ It is a nation in its primordial (*ursprünglich*) or natural state. In the earlier discussion at the PGB meeting, Lassalle separates historical nations from nations, which remain in their natural state.⁸⁹ It is his view that over the course of history these latter kinds of nations vanish. They shall be assimilated into the historical nations. They have no right to existence.

According to Lassalle, a nation is truly free only if it presupposes its own concept and strives to realize it. In order to set its own concept, a nation has to become conscious of itself. The fact that the German people are divided into several states, prevents the German nation from becoming conscious of itself. The antagonism between the German tribes (*Volkstamm*) results from the vanity (*Eitelkeit*) of the concept.⁹⁰ This vanity is the unity of the concept, which holds the particular German states together. The unity of these states is essentially egotistic, since it is founded on the particular self (*das besondere Selbst*). The unity is eventually weak, which became evident, e.g., during the revolutions of 1848. The nationalist sentiment (*Volksgefühl*) of the Germans emerges once the boundaries between the Germans dissolve. Lassalle claims that the German literature already embodies the German national sentiment.⁹¹

In his earlier Fichte commentary, Lassalle elaborates the possible unification of Germany.⁹² He argues that the true unification of Germany cannot be based on the confederation of the existing German states. This federation would be a unification (*Einigung*) of Germans, but not a unity (*Einheit*) of Germans. The unity should both encompass the diversity of Germans (e.g., regional and religious identities) and acknowledge the basic nature (*Grundcharakter*) of all Germans (e.g., common literature). He argues that the confederation of the

[86] PF, p. 148; FV, p. 100.

[87] PF, pp. 150–1; AICHELE, „Einleitung“, p. LXXXVIII.

[88] FV, pp. 72–4.

[89] „Ueber den Begriff...“, pp. 249, 251–2.

[90] FV, pp. 90–1.

[91] Ibid., p. 88.

[92] Ibid., pp. 83, 86, 95–7.

German states would not endure: the members of the confederation would end up in war against each other. It would – sooner or later – end up in a dominance of one state over the other. Eventually though this dominance would come to an end too. Instead of the confederation, Germans would be truly united in a rational state (*Vernunftstaat*).

Lassalle does not refer to his Rosenkranz talk, but he mentions that the disintegration of the confederation is necessary because of the movement of spiritual chemism.⁹³ The confederation of the German states would not acknowledge the common ground of the Germans. Thus, the juxtaposition (*Gegenüberstellung*) of the German states is arbitrary and must fall down. This is the historical law, first explicitly defined by Fichte and by Hegel after him. Here Lassalle definitely applies his general theory of the logical course of history to the case of Germany.

It is by no means clear that Fichte would share Lassalle's understanding of the unification of Germany. As James argues, "[...] there are no conclusive grounds for thinking that the German Republic [that Fichte envisages] would be a single state rather than a federation of independent German states".⁹⁴ Furthermore, Fichte "[...] does not treat the nation and the state as coextensive [...]".⁹⁵ On the contrary, Lassalle's claims imply that the rational state of the Germans should encompass all the Germans.

One possible reason for this difference between Fichte and Lassalle is that Lassalle regards the German nation more unified than Fichte. In his *Addresses*, Fichte speaks of a pre-existing unity of the Germans, but he also argues that this unity must first be created.⁹⁶ His idea is that establishing a higher national unity requires education of the people.⁹⁷ Lassalle does not pay attention to Fichte's ideas for the reform of education. These ideas influenced, e.g., the University of Berlin, which opened in 1810. This implies that for Lassalle the education of the people is not the central task at the moment: the national unity has developed and become stronger in the spiritual realm. The necessary task is now to realize this unity in the political realm.

Although Lassalle acknowledges the plurality of nations (e.g., the French have a common history, whereas the Germans have not), he argues that eventually all nations must strive for statehood. This is not surprising given that in

[93] Ibid., p. 96.

[94] JAMES, *Fichte's republic*, p. 175.

[95] Ibid., p. 165.

[96] Ibid., pp. 184–5.

[97] Ibid., p. 148.

his Rosenkranz talk he identifies nations with logical concepts. It is necessary for a logical concept to strive for realization.⁹⁸

So, Lassalle insists that the purely spiritual existence of the German nation must come to an end. Although his analysis of the political situation in Germany is negative, he argues at the very end of his speech that the recent demands for the unity of Germany testify that the Germans are indeed up to the task of self-realization.⁹⁹ Though he does not bring up any events, which indicate the unification of Germany, which eventually took place less than ten years later. Four months after Lassalle's speech Otto von Bismarck became prime minister of Prussia.

VI. LASSALLE AND LATE HEGELIANISM

As mentioned, Lassalle received a poor reception to his Fichte speech.¹⁰⁰ Michelet explains that the diverse (*gemischt*) audience regarded the speech as difficult.¹⁰¹ But that does not explain, why the "strictly scientific" (*streng wissenschaftlich*) speech¹⁰² was disregarded in the scholarly journal *Der Gedanke*. In this chapter, I highlight some reasons to this.

To begin with, there is no reason to doubt Lassalle's Hegelianism.¹⁰³ E.g., Georg Lasson, a later member of the PGB, regarded Lassalle's Rosenkranz talk as an example of the Hegel-orthodoxy (*Hegelorthodoxie*).¹⁰⁴ Whereas Trendelenburg makes just a couple of references to Hegel in his extensive Fichte speech,¹⁰⁵ Lassalle does not hesitate to underline Fichte's relevance for Hegel: his Fichte is as Hegelian as his Heraclitus. Lassalle polemizes that he discovers the seeds of Hegel's philosophy in every page of Fichte's works.¹⁰⁶

As concerns philosophy of history, it is yet problematic to emphasize the similarity between Fichte and Hegel to such extent. It is possible to argue that Fichte's philosophy of history is in accordance with Hegel's famous thesis that the rational is real, and the real is rational.¹⁰⁷ Yet, there is a crucial difference

[98] HRL, p. 133.

[99] PF, p. 152.

[100] BRANDES, *Ferdinand Lassalle*, p. 156.

[101] C.L. MICHELET, *Wahrheit aus meinem Leben*. Berlin: Nicolai, 1884, p. 250.

[102] MICHELET, „Geschichte. Zweiter Theil“, p. 285.

[103] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 265.

[104] G. LASSON, „Lassalle, Ferdinand. Die Hegelsche und Rosenkranzsche Logik und die Grundlage der Hegelschen Geschichtsphilosophie im Hegelschen System“, *Kant-Studien*, Bd. XXXVI (1931), p. 356.

[105] TRENDLENBURG, *Zur Erinnerung*, pp. 10, 20.

[106] PF, p. 126.

[107] E.M. DALE, *Hegel, the end of history, and the future*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 146.

between Hegel and Fichte. Namely, “[...] Hegel specifically eschews a priori approaches to history, if this means forcing the events of history into preconceived and predetermined avenues of development”.¹⁰⁸ In fact, he warned not to construct an a priori system of history like that of Fichte’s *Characteristics of the Present Age* (*Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*; 1806). Lassalle does not acknowledge the difference between Hegel and Fichte. Rather he argues that Hegel developed a deeper understanding of Fichte’s philosophy of history and suggests that Hegel provided more comprehensive definitions of the predetermined avenues of development postulated by Fichte. This is a highly problematic claim.

Besides, Lassalle does not pay attention to the fact that Fichte not only argues for an a priori deduction of the course of history in his *Characteristics* but he also mentions in some passages that just the outline of the course of history is deducible a priori.¹⁰⁹ Lassalle’s examples of the logical course of history indicate that he does not restrict the scope of deduction like Fichte. He even claims that he could give even more concrete examples of the logical processes in history.

Generally speaking, Lassalle was of two minds of his scholarly career during his time in the Berlin society. At the PGB meetings, he never promoted his socialist ideas.¹¹⁰ After he had left the society, he began intense agitation for the labor movement. It is possible to argue that Lassalle’s Fichte speech marked a watershed in his intellectual career: the speech is as scientific as political.¹¹¹

Fichte’s *Addresses*, the most controversial of his works,¹¹² is a political work – or even a political manifesto – as well. Instead of discerning between philosophical arguments¹¹³ and politics in the *Addresses*, Lassalle underlines the close connection between Fichte’s nationalism and his philosophy. Interestingly, Lassalle arrived at political conclusions in his second major work (*The System of vested Rights*) as well.¹¹⁴ Yet, in his political agitation, Lassalle never referred to this work.¹¹⁵ But in the case of Fichte, Lassalle blurs the boundary between theory and practice, between science and politics.

[108] Ibid., p. 159.

[109] HÜBNER, *Geschichtsphilosophie*, pp. 73–4.

[110] MICHELET, „Geschichte. Zweiter Theil“, p. 285.

[111] HUFF, „Ferdinand“, p. 420.

[112] AICHELE, „Einleitung“, pp. VII, XIV, LXVII.

[113] SCHÄFER (“The Ontological”, p. 154) has listed some philosophical issues of the *Addresses*.

[114] RAMM, „Ferdinand“, p. 498.

[115] BRANDES, *Ferdinand Lassalle*, pp. 83–84.

It is Lassalle's view that Kant and German idealists all reflect German national spirit.¹¹⁶ He presents Fichte simply as the greatest German patriot.¹¹⁷ Nationalizing German idealism in this way is controversial, since, e.g., Fichte's or Hegel's relation to German nationalism was anything but straightforward. Both Fichte and Hegel had different views on nationalism and cosmopolitanism in different stages of their career. E.g., as James has pointed out, certain nationalist elements in Fichte's *Addresses* possibly contradict with the concept of freedom of his earlier idealism.¹¹⁸ Moreover, as Schäfer argues, Fichte seeks to sublimate the tension between cosmopolitanism and nationalism in his *Addresses*.¹¹⁹ That is, Fichte suggests the possibility that Germany is an open nation: "[...] it is absolutely open to each and every human to become Germanized".¹²⁰

Unlike Lassalle, his fellow Monrad emphasizes that Fichte was far more too cosmopolitan to support any kind of narrow nationalism.¹²¹ Trendelenburg portrays Fichte as a German nationalist, but instead of highlighting Fichte's nationalism, Trendelenburg gives a balanced picture of his career.¹²²

In the earlier discussion at the PGB meeting, Lassalle's view on nationalism appears more balanced: he argues that nation's right to existence depends upon its contribution to the progression of humanity.¹²³ A nation, which leaves its natural state behind and becomes a historical nation, benefits not only its members but also all humanity.¹²⁴ Historical nations are bearers of the one idea, in which all the national differences are sublated.¹²⁵ So, the question of nationality is settled. In his Fichte speech, he does not arrive into this cosmopolitan conclusion, but rather contrasts Germany with all other nations.

Lassalle's philosophy of history is founded on the principle that the course of history is eventually logical and rational. Combining this principle with the political agenda raises questions. Lassalle encourages Germans to strive for unification and freedom. At the same time, the course of history is – at least to some extent – necessary. Now, one asks, whether the Germans have a real

[116] PF, p. 134.

[117] FV, p. 69.

[118] JAMES, *Fichte's republic*, p. 179. JAMES argues (p. 2), though, "[...] that at a deeper level there is a degree of continuity [...]" between Fichte's idealism and nationalism.

[119] SCHÄFER, "The Ontological", pp. 157–9. See also AICHELE, "Einleitung", pp. LXII–LXXIII.

[120] SCHÄFER, "The Ontological", p. 159.

[121] M.J. MONRAD, „Nachtrag zur Fichtefeier“, *Der Gedanke*, 2 (4) (Bd. 3.) (1862), pp. 271, 276.

[122] TRENDLENBURG, *Zur Erinnerung*, pp. 30–32.

[123] „Ueber den Begriff...“, pp. 251–2.

[124] MICHELET, „Geschichte“ (1878), p. 104.

[125] „Ueber den Begriff...“, p. 250.

possibility to change the course of history? One could argue that the Germans will inevitably accomplish the national unity in some point time. Thus, they have no real change to alter the course of history.

Lassalle also argues that the existence of the German nation is indeed threatened. This implies that the German nation is not necessarily a historical nation and thus it has eventually no right to existence. But this contradicts with the claim that the occurrence of the German nation – its existence beyond the state – is truly unique. It remains unclear, how the uniqueness of the German nation relates to the logical course of history.

Finally, to conclude the paper, I suggest that Lassalle confuses two different arguments: the argument that the German nation shall be the first realize the realm of freedom and the argument that only the German nation can realize the realm of freedom. The former is more defensible than the latter. Fichte avoids Lassalle's problem. He proclaims that only Germans realize the true freedom. But "[...] this is the case during this specific historical era [...]".¹²⁶ It is not a logical necessity.

ABBREVIATIONS

- FV LASSALLE, Ferdinand, „Fichtes politisches Vermächtnis und die neueste Gegenwart“ (1860), in E. BERNSTEIN (ed.) *Gesammelte Reden und Schriften* 6. Berlin: Paul Cassirer, 1919, pp. 67–102.
- GA FICHTE, Johann Gottlieb, Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Eds. REINHARD LAUTH & HANS JACOB. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann, 1964ff.
- HRL LASSALLE, Ferdinand, „Die Hegel'sche und die Rosenkranzische Logik und die Grundlage der Hegel'schen Geschichtsphilosophie im Hegel'schen System“ in *Der Gedanke*, 1 (5) (Band 2.) (1861), pp. 123–150.
- PF LASSALLE, Ferdinand, „Die Philosophie Fichte's und die Bedeutung des Deutschen Volksgeistes“ (1862), in E. BERNSTEIN (ed.), *Gesammelte Reden und Schriften* 6. Berlin: Paul Cassirer, 1919, pp. 103–152.

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[126] SCHÄFER, „The Ontological“, p. 157.

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