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Between Life and Spirit: The Place of Plants in Hegel's Dialectic of Nature

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to examine the place of plants in G.W.F. Hegel's philosophy, highlighting their relevance for understanding the relationship between life and spirit within the Hegelian dialectical system. We will demonstrate how plants are situated in the context of the Philosophy of Nature proposed by the author, emphasizing how, despite being understood through their "incomplete subjectivity" and limited individuality (as there is no individual cohesion due to the separation of their organs), it is still possible to conceive of the basic metabolism of plants as the first expression of the dialectical relationship between inner life and the external environment. In this sense, plants represent a special transitional moment in the progressive realisation of the Idea. We will analyze how plants, for Hegel, embody a universal form of life – self-organized and oriented toward its relationship with the environment – that serves as a point of mediation, or the nexus, between the objectivity of nature and the subjectivity of spirit, which will develop more fully in animal life, especially human life. As we intend to demonstrate, referring to the subjective incompleteness of plant life does not deny it a place in the very history of spirit.

Keywords: Hegel; dialectics of nature; life; Spirit; freedom.

I. Introduction[1]

Hegel's philosophy is characterized by the systematic integration of all aspects of reality into a dialectical movement that culminates in the self-understanding of the Absolute Spirit. In this process, nature is more than a contingent stage; it is a necessary and speculative manifestation of the Idea in its exteriority. From this perspective, plants play a significant role by representing a specific form of vital organisation that mediates

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the transition between the realms of life and spirit.

Hegel conceives of plants as beings that express the unity and diversity of life in its most elemental form. Although devoid of subjectivity, they are not mere objects of nature: plants possess a structure that exemplifies the dialectic between biological life and spirit. Through their grow and reproduction, they reveal the dynamics of life as an expression of incipient freedom. Plants, for Hegel, exemplify the dialectical struggle between the determinism of nature and the drive toward freedom, something that will be more fully developed in animals and, ultimately, in the human spirit. In this paper, we aim to analyze how plants, in their apparent simplicity, express themselves as the knot that connects biological life and spirit. Furthermore, as we will highlight, Hegel's understanding of plants goes beyond the biological sphere, involving metaphysical and epistemological aspects that enrich the philosophical debate on plant philosophy.

II. From Life to Spirit

To understand the structure of Hegel's philosophical system, it is necessary to keep in mind at least two basic conceptions of his philosophy: (1) reality is spirit; and (2) spirit is dialectical. Everything is explained by the unfolding of the idea, because "the spirit is the idea that is realized and contemplated through its own unfolding" (Sousa 2010, 41). From this conception, therefore, we can infer the importance and centrality of nature in the Hegelian philosophical system. As the author explicitly states in his *Phänomenologie des Geistes*[2]: Science can only arise from phenomenal knowledge and movement (PG, 70–72). Once the importance of nature is revealed, it is the starting point, for it is through the manifestation of the phenomenon of nature that we apprehend the movement of the absolute idea. It is not by chance that the plant is the example used by Hegel to demonstrate this fact: the seed carries within itself the idea of a plant; it is not yet outside itself but will develop as a reason that unfolds. Thus, the seed is, in itself, the plant, but it needs to disappear as a seed to become a plant and, in this way, return to itself. It is noted how, through this analogy, it is possible to understand the first movement of dialectics, which takes place in a primordial way in the vegetable world.

In the paragraphs devoted to *Organic Physics*, in the third section of the *Philosophy of Nature*, which corresponds to the second volume of the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, Hegel treats of *Geological Nature*, *Vegetable Nature* and *Animal Nature*. In these texts, the author states that the Idea does not remain as an abstract concept but manifests itself in a concrete way in reality. For him, 'life' is the first stage of

2 In this work we will use the following acronyms for Hegel's works, followed by page or paragraph corresponding to the edition that appears in the references: *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (EPW); *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (PG). All translations are our own responsibility. We have chosen to work directly with the original German texts, without being influenced by existing translations. As a result, all translations presented here are our own responsibility.

this manifestation, by which the Idea assumes an immediate and sensible existence in the natural world. This is only the beginning of a larger dialectical process, in which the Idea progresses towards its full realisation in the human spirit and in the absolute spirit. To reach this full realisation, the Idea develops in life in three ways (EPW, § 337):

A. As *a figure*, the universal image of life, the *geological* organism.
B. As a particular and formal subjectivity, the *plant organism*.
C. As a singular and concrete subjectivity, the animal organism.

This is because, as stated in § 215 of the *Enzyklopädie*, the idea is "essentially *process*" and possesses "truth and actual reality only insofar as it is in itself subjective" (EPW, § 337). This process begins with the *geological* organism, the first stage of the expression of nature as a figure. At this level, it remains only an immediate Idea, external to itself, being characterized as a non-life. For this reason, Hegel describes it as "only the corpse of the vital process," representing the organism as "*the totality* of existing nature as non-living, mechanical and physical" (EPW, § 337). Then, in the second moment of the process of development of the Idea in nature, towards the full realisation of the spirit, the *living being in* vegetable *nature* appears, where subjective vitality begins. The plant, the first individual, is characterized by Hegel as something still outside itself, decomposing into limbs that, in turn, are also individuals. Only in the *animal organism* (on the subject of the animal organism, see the important work of Vasconcelos 2022), according to Hegel, does the Idea develop to the point of reaching distinctions of configuration that make it *subject*. Life, as far as it is natural, expresses itself in the multiplicity of living beings as subjective organisms, but it is only in the Idea that "they constitute *one* life, one organic system of life" (EPW, § 337; also, see Sousa Albertino 2010).

It is noted, therefore, that Hegel situates plants as an intermediate moment in the process of realizing the Idea in nature. Unlike geological organisms, which represent the most inert form of natural reality, plants have an internal organisation that reflects the transition to organic life. According to the author, "the plant is the universal organism, in which the process unfolds in its totality, but without one part dominating or subsuming the others as an individual" (EPW, § 344). Hegel sees plants as universal organisms that exhibit functional integration but do not attain full individuality. Plants are a speculative metaphor for the dialectical unity between the universal and the particular, given that each organ maintains its relative autonomy while contributing to the whole. The fragmented character of vegetable life reflects, according to Hegel, the inability to achieve subjective interiority, which will be fully realized only in animals.

Nevertheless, Hegel attributes to plants a singular and crucial role in the transition between the geological non-living organism and the beginning of subjective vitality, which gives them, in our view, a dignity that is often underestimated, even by the author himself. The plant, for Hegel, possesses the process of life in its totality, but without interiority.

This absence of interiority reveals that plants are governed by a principle of exteriority, in which the relationships between their parts and the environment predominate. However, it is precisely this characteristic that positions them as an indispensable speculative link in the dialectical progression of the Idea in nature.

Hegel highlights the importance of plants as mediators between the inorganic domain and conscious life. They are the transition point at which natural necessity begins to acquire a living organisation. In this sense, plants are not merely lower forms of life, but essential agents that prepare the ground for more complex forms of existence. Their apparent simplicity hides a fundamental role in the process of continuous sublimation of nature by the Idea, evidencing the importance of treating them with the dignity required by their position in the chain of vital development and which has been neglected for a long time.

Plants are a paradigmatic example of how nature organizes itself dialectically in an effort to transcend its limitation. Such an analysis underlines the role of plants as a speculative model that reflects nature's internal dynamics toward freedom. The overcoming of natural exteriority occurs in the search to transcend the conditions imposed by nature, allowing the spirit to free itself as much as possible, in different degrees, from natural needs. This dynamic is noticeable in the more complex dependence relationship of living beings compared to non-living beings. In plants, for example, a self-determination is observed both in their growth and in their reproduction, driven by a force that generates a distinctive unity in their own constitution. It is this dynamic of plants, as beings that grow and interact with the environment, which symbolizes the dialectical effort to overcome simple materiality. In the growth of the plant, it is life itself that expands. In the wake of Hans Jonas' statement in *Phenomenon of Life,* that "life means material life, i.e., living body, i.e., organic being" and that in the "body, the knot of being is tied" (Jonas 2001, 25; also, see Batistoni & Erle 2021; Battistoni 2023), we can affirm that the plant, in Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*, is also the knot that ties life and spirit[3]. To better understand this process, in what follows, we will analyze the characteristics of plant vitality established by Hegel.

III. Vitality of Plants in *The Philosophy of Nature*

Hegel begins § 343 on vegetable nature by identifying *subjectivity* in the organic realm as that which defines the individuality of a living being. In the case of animals, this subjectivity manifests itself in a more evident way, since each animal is clearly a distinct 'individual' that maintains its unity as a subject. This subjective individual unfolds into an *objective organism*, which is the physical body, composed of articulated and differentiated parts. Each part has a specific function but is subordinated to the unity of the whole.

3 For a comprehensive analysis of Jonas's conception of vegetal mind (inner activity) and its ontological and ethical implications, see Souza and Oliveira (2025).

In the case of plants, subjectivity (the internal life that constitutes the plant as an organism) and objectivity (the organisation of its physical parts) exist in an immediate relationship. The plant does not possess a clear subjective unity like animals; instead, the plant is a diffuse totality. As Hegel states:

> In the plant, in the subjective and only immediate vitality, the objective organism and its subjectivity are still immediately identical, where the process of articulation and self-preservation of the vegetal subject is a coming-out-of-itself and a dissociation into several individuals, for whom the one and the whole individual is more only the terrain than the subjective unity of the members; the part, the bud, the branch, etc., is also the complete plant (EPW, § 343).

The vital process of the plant is described as a *coming-out-of-itself*, that is, it externalizes its life through growth and the production of parts such as buds, branches, flowers, fruits, etc. This results in a fragmentation: the unity of the plant is not as centralized (as in animals), and its parts can be seen as almost autonomous. For example, each branch or bud has the potential to be a 'complete plant'. However, the parts (bud, branch, flower) differ superficially: "Moreover, the difference of the organic parts is only a superficial metamorphosis; and one part can easily pass into the function of the other" (EPW, § 343). This plasticity in which one part can often assume the function of another, demonstrates that plants have a less rigid organisation than animals. Such a characteristic of plants, in our view, denotes a superiority rather than an inferiority in relation to other forms of life, to the extent that, due to its plasticity, the plant inhabits the world better and is capable of reaching land, water and even air that are practically uninhabitable for animals.

In the following paragraph, Hegel argues that the process of formation and reproduction[4] of a singular individual is not separate from the general process of the species. Both coincide, that is, the emergence of new individuals is always part of a larger, continuous and universal movement. This means that the "self-filled universality" (the universal essence or principle that underlies life) does not exist separately from concrete individuals but manifests itself directly in "real particularisation" (EPW, § 344), i.e., in the individuals who are born, grow, and reproduce. In practice, the plant lives by 'sacrificing' itself – that is, its individuality – to generate other plants, in such a way that it is possible to speak of a reproduction that occurs as an attempt to guarantee the continuity of the species at the expense of individual sacrifice, which is nothing more than an expression of the very incompleteness of plant subjectivity.

Thus, the plant is an organism that represents a subjectivity 'not for itself', that is, a form of life that is not aware of itself. In other words, the plant represents an advance in relation to minerals (which do not have life), although they remain inferior to animals in terms of autonomy, for example. The plant, therefore, is defined by its organism that is 'in itself', but that does not separate itself from the environment or act on it autonomously:

4 For an analysis of the dialectic of organic life carried out by Hegel in the form of physiological development, especially reproduction, see Suzuki 2020.

> The plant, as a subjectivity that is not yet for itself, in relation to its organism that it is in itself (§ 342), does not determine its place by itself, does not move from the place, nor is it by itself before the physical particularisation and individualisation of it; hence it has no self-interrupting intussusception, but a nourishment which flows continuously, and turns not to the individualized inorganic, but to the universal elements (EPW, § 344).

What distinguishes plants from animal organisms, which have greater complexity, is, therefore, the condemnation to their place of rootedness[5] and, to the extent that it does not separate itself from its environment, it establishes a relationship of full individuality with the environment, a homogeneous set with it. In addition, the plant feeds continuously, without interruption, not on individualized elements as animals do. Instead, it absorbs universal elements such as sunlight, water, and minerals, while remaining connected to a broader dynamic of inorganic nature.

According to Hegel, again, the plant is prevented from animal heat or feeling: "Still less is it capable of animal heat and feeling, since it is not the process of bringing its members, which are rather only parts and also individuals, back to the negative and simple unity" (EPW, § 344). This means that the plant is not able to internalize and unify its life processes into a "negative and simple unity," which is characteristic of animals, as well as the conscious and centralized unity of its parts[6]. This 'negative unity' refers to the ability of an organism to perceive itself as something distinct and active in relation to the external world.

Regarding the *figure* of plants, with regard to abstract and concrete forms, Hegel argues that the plant, as an organic being, is composed of differentiated structures, such as cells and fibers (abstract forms), as well as other more concrete ones (for example, organs such as leaves or flowers). However, even with this differentiation, these parts maintain an original homogeneity, that is, they do not individualize completely, remaining uniformly connected. While it has not yet reached a high degree of subjectivity and individuality ("incomplete subjectivity," Winfield 2018), the plant shows a certain

5 Even though they are rooted in the soil, plants use the mobility of animals as a way to spread their seeds and thus multiply. There would be, as Stefano Mancuso notes, a collaboration between plants and animals: "there are countless examples of cooperation that proved to be advantageous for both actors. They usually provide a reward to the animal for the services rendered. This is the case of the pollinator rewarded with tasty and energetic nectar, the bird that spreads seeds in exchange for an appetizing fruit, or also man – the best vector that can be dreamed of on this planet – who, in exchange for food, beauty or other advantages, spreads everywhere the plants he needs. However, things are not always so clear. In many situations, the conduct of plants is more suspicious and opportunistic, and the services provided by animals are used without having a reward in return. The seeds of burdock – the plant that inspired the invention of Velcro – and hundreds of other species called *hitchhikers* cling to the skin of animals without offering anything in exchange for the passage" (Mancuso 2018, 75–76).

6 This perception of the greater importance of centralization for animal life is also noted by Jonas: "The stationary plant could no more profit from centralization and individuality than the moving animal could be without them. We see accordingly that centralization is different from organic unity of the complex whole, nor always accompanying such unity, but is a new fact in the evolution of metazoic (multi-cellular) organisms, confined to animal life and coincident with the evolution of sentience and motility" (Jonas 1974, 198).

proximity to "geometric forms and the regularity of crystals" (EPW, § 344)[7]. This means that it is still influenced by simple and regular patterns of inorganic nature, such as those found in geometry. In addition, the results of the vital process of plants (for example, fruits or seeds) also remain close to chemical phenomena, being a less complex and mediated relationship compared to animal organisms.

This debate refers to Goethe's *Versuch die Metamorphose der Pflanzen zu erklären* (Goethe 2009), referred to by Hegel as a milestone in rational thinking about plants. This work took the focus off the study of plants as collections of isolated parts (singularities) and redirected it to the understanding of the *unity of life* present in them. One of Goethe's main theses is the idea that all parts of a plant are variations of a fundamental structure that he calls the 'primitive leaf' [*Urblatt*] from which the growth and development of plants occurs, as part of a continuous transformation of this same basic structure. This is precisely the metamorphosis of plants, whose orientation is intrinsic and regular, produced from an internal order and according to their own dynamism. Goethe proposes the thesis that there is an archetypal or primitive plant [*Urpflanze*] that would serve as a 'matrix' for understanding the variations of the same basic pattern. For Hegel,

> *Goethe's Metamorphosis of Plants* initiated the rational way of thinking about the nature of plants, by wresting representation from the effort around simple singularities and leading it towards the knowledge of the unity of life. The identity of the organs is preponderant in the category of metamorphosis; but the determinate difference and the peculiar function of the members, through which the vital process is placed, is the other side necessary to that substantial unity. The physiology of plants necessarily appears to be more obscure than that of the animal body, because it is simpler; assimilation goes through few mediations and change happens as an immediate infection. As in the whole process of natural and spiritual life, the main fact in assimilation and secretion is the substantial change, i.e., the immediate transmutation of one external or particular matter into another, a point is reached at which the pursuit of mediation, whether in the mode of chemical gradualness or mechanical gradualness, is interrupted and rendered impossible. This point is everywhere and pervades everything, and the non-knowledge, or rather the non-recognition of this simple identification and this simple split, is what makes a physiology of the living impossible (EPW, § 345).

The concept of metamorphosis proposed by Goethe and, in a way, corroborated by Hegel (on the relationship between Hegel and Goethe around the vegetable question, see Kelley 2009)[8], emphasizes the underlying identity between plant organs, for example, the

7 Such perception and effort to bring plants closer to geological nature rather than animal nature (considered the true kingdom of life) has currently been harshly criticized by numerous authors (Marder 2013; Marder 2014; Marder 2021; Marder 2023; Coccia 2016, 2021; Mancuso 2018; Mancuso 2022; Mancuso 2023a; Mancuso 2023b; Mancuso & Viola 2018; Hiernaux 2019; Hiernaux 2020; Calvo 2023).

8 In her text, Kelley analyzes the problems brought by Goethe's *Versuch die Metamorphose der Pflanzen* to Hegel's interpretation, demonstrating, in a certain sense, that both authors maintain an ambiguous relationship: on the one hand, Goethe becomes an ally of Hegel; on the other, an antagonist. If Hegel recognizes the importance of the idea of internal development and continuity in plant life, he, on the other hand, criticizes any attribution of a spiritual or intentional dimension to plants as such. As we have argued in the present text, although it is true that Hegel disagrees with Goethe on this second point, it is necessary to recognize that plants occupy a special place in the dialectic of nature precisely because they are not totally devoid of an inner dimension – which

transformation of leaves into flowers. However, Hegel emphasizes that, to comprehend the vital process, one must consider not only the identity of the organs, but also their differentiation. *Functional difference* among them, since it is these differences that make the vital process possible. Hence the importance of understanding the physiology of plants, considered more obscure and less comprehensible than that of animals precisely because of its simplicity. An example of this is the process of assimilation (absorption of nutrients) that is direct, without many mediations, and the changes that happen as immediate reactions.

At the heart of life, both in plants and animals, is the phenomenon of transformation of external matter into internal matter (metabolism). This 'substantial change' occurs directly, but at a certain point, chemical or mechanical explanations fail to advance, revealing a limit in the material understanding of life. Hegel recognizes that in all life processes there is a point at which physical or chemical mediation breaks down and can no longer explain phenomena. This point is essential to understand the living being, but it is often not recognized, which makes it difficult to have a true interpretation of life. In other words, plant physiology faces challenges in explaining what the plant is, because life cannot be completely explained solely in material terms[9].

It is with this conception that Hegel, in the following paragraphs (EPW, § 346, § 347 and § 346), seeks to describe the dynamic and complex process of plant vitality, which is divided into different moments and phases, and is articulated between unity and multiplicity, between the internal and external relationship of the plant with the world, and how the reproduction and continuity of life occur through a dynamic cycle. The vitality of plants is understood by Hegel as a unitary process that is divided into three parts: (1) configuration, (2) growth, and (3) production of new individuals.

The *process of configuration* is the first moment of vitality and deals with the internal relationship of the plant with itself. The plant, as a vegetative being, relates to something extrinsic (such as water and light, for example) and, at the same time, externalizes itself in the environment. The plant, therefore, is not only something closed in on itself, but opens itself to the world and is in constant interaction with what is around it. The plant performs an immediate transmutation of the nutritive flows (such as water and minerals) and the internally transformed vital juice, creating its specific form. This process happens in a direct way, without complications, transforming what is external into a substance of

would simply be to transform them into minerals, which Hegel avoids, precisely (also, see Suzuki 2020).

9 This critique of materialism, which closed access to life by reducing it to its merely material and mechanical characteristics, is one of the central focuses of Hans Jonas' critique of modern science. For the author of *The Phenomenon of Life* (Jonas 1966), materialism has left aside what should be understood as one of the central marks of organisms: precisely their inner activity (in Jonas' words, their *mind*), which he describes as the first step on the long ladder of freedom, which starts from metabolism and reaches human rationality. As a descriptive concept of life, freedom occurs as the opening of each being to the world: from its vulnerability, each organism needs to make certain 'decisions' so that its life remains possible. Such deliberative acts in view of their own self-affirmation would be expressions and testimonies of the interiority of life.

its own.

On the other hand, as *mediation* with itself, the vitality of the plant manifests itself in two splits: one external and the other internal. As an external split, the plant divides into root, which seeks soil and nutrients, and foliage, which seeks light and air. As an internal fission, cellular tissue is divided more abstractly into woody fibers and vital vessels, which allow for the transport and circulation of nutrients. These divisions aim at both self-sufficiency and reproduction. Thus, the growth of the plant is described by Hegel as a continuous production of new formations. This does not only mean the preservation of the individual (the mother plant), but the production of new individuals that arise from the plant, such as the shoots (new shoots).

The second moment of the vitality of the plant, which is immediately connected with the first, refers to the "*process that specifies itself outwards*" (EPW, § 347), precisely because the configuration, i.e., the structure of the plant, is directly connected to the process that leads it to develop outwards, interacting with the world around it, particularly through the process of germination. According to Hegel, the seed begins its growth process from external stimuli, such as water and light. It does not grow in isolation, but depends on external conditions for its development, which is divided into parts (root and foliage), oriented to different elements of the environment: the roots go deep into the earth in search of nutrients and water, while the leaves turn to light and air. Although the plant, in Hegel's view, does not have a consciousness or a feeling of itself (characteristics of animals), its growth does not happen in a disordered way. The plant "is rather attracted to light as its external self" (EPW, § 347), it creeps toward the light, with branches spreading out, creating a multiplicity of individuals (like new branches or shoots). Therefore, light is not a mere source of energy for the plant, but responsible for imparting to it specific qualities, such as "strengthening, aromaticity, the spirituality of odor and knowledge, the splendor and depth of colors, the compactness and vigor of the configuration" (EPW, § 347).

Reproduction and its relation to *flowering*, characterized by Hegel as the light generated "from itself as its *own* self" (EPW, § 348), is the third moment of plant vitality. The moment when the neutral green color of the plant transforms into a specific color, as in the case of colored flowers, symbolizes the approximation of the genus process. Such a process involves a "relation of the individual self" (EPW, § 348) to the continuity of life. However, this relationship is not a full self-relationship, but it is a difference that allows the continuity of the process. The germ (plant embryo) must be considered as an individual, but its vitality goes through a process of development that culminates in the production of a new seed. Hegel notes that while the process of germination and flowering is a form of reproduction, the vitality of the plant is not linked simply to the creation of more individuals. This is because the process of configuration and assimilation, that is, the continuous growth of the plant, is already a form of reproduction, since each new branch, each new shoot, is, in a certain sense, a repetition of the process of life.

This process of configuration, growth and reproduction leads the plant to the development of an individuality, which means that it does not depend entirely on external factors but manages to establish an integrated relationship with itself. Hegel says:

> But what has been put into the concept is that the process represents the individuality, which has returned to itself, and the parts – which are primarily individuals – also as the moments belonging to mediation and passing through it; thus, the immediate individuality and reciprocal exteriority of vegetable life appear as negated. This moment of negative determination establishes the passage to the true organism, in which the external configuration is consonant with the concept, so that the parts exist essentially as members and subjectivity as the penetrative unit of the whole (EPW, § 349).

The return to itself indicates, in our view, the perception that, although the plant is in constant interaction with the outside world (soil, light, water, etc.), it becomes a self-conscious individuality, even if at a more basic level, that is, it already begins to exist as a unit of life that has internal coherence and its own identity. This is because their parts are not independent or self-sufficient but represent a mediation that connects them and places them in a network of relationships. These parts are seen as moments that contribute to the unity of the organism, that is, they are different, but their difference is necessary for the formation of a unitary whole. Each part of the plant is interdependent and cannot exist without the others, forming an organic whole.

In this process, immediate individuality (the plant as a separate being, with its independent parts) and reciprocal exteriority (the plant's interactions with the external world) are denied. This means that the initial divisions and separations are overcome, that is, the parts, previously considered as independent elements, are now integrated into the organism in an interdependent way. Hegel is suggesting that, in the dialectic of vitality, the plant goes beyond the view of its components as something isolated and reaches a deeper unity, in which the differences between the parts (the roots, leaves, and flowers) are integrated into a cohesive and functional organism.

This movement in which the individuality/interiority and exteriority of the parts are overcome, the parts becoming members of a cohesive whole, reflects the idea that the true organisation of a plant is one in which its parts are in harmony and its external configuration reflects its internal concept. It is this process of organisation, harmony and unity in plants that becomes the node between biological life and spirit, which paves the way for the understanding of more complex organisms, in which the parts of the organism are not just reactions or external parts, but essential components of a living totality.

IV. Concluding Remarks

Critical of modern science in its fragmented and empiricist form, even inheriting some of the weaknesses of the criticized method, Hegel opens, as we have seen, the possibility for a new interpretation and relocation of plants in the realm of life and

spirit. If he did not carry out these intuitions in a complete way, we can recognize that his clues are sufficient for the reconstruction of a thought that gives plants their place of importance in the history of life. This is because, as seen, plants, although often neglected in philosophical studies, represent an important stage in the dialectical development of life, in which nature begins to reveal its search for freedom by transcending materiality.

While non-living beings remain in the exteriority of their forms, plants offer a principle of self-determination, demonstrating how life emerges as a continuous effort to overcome the inertia of matter. This intermediate stage between the inertia of the inorganic world and the fuller interiority of animals symbolizes the articulation of life as a process of development towards unity and spirit. It is in this context that plants can be understood as an expression of a dialectical movement that not only organizes life, but as mediators between nature and spirit, the knot between life and spirit.

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