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The three internal functions of the living subject

In Hegel's system, life first figures as a major logical category. In the *Science of Logic*, it is the first category of the domain of the Idea, the categories of which signify processes through which subjectivity unites with its objectivity. Because life is the *first* category of the Idea, it stands for the *immediate* unity of the subject and object. On one hand, life as a logical category lays out the fundamental characteristics of being alive and serves as a standard for any determinacy of nature or mind that can be considered as living, without exhausting what is specific to those universal determinacies. On the other hand, due to the presuppositionless character of Hegel's system, the logic of life is supposed to unfold irrespective of the kinds of living things there actually are.

The logic of life involves three moments, which expound three fundamental processes. The first moment is about the internal process and unity of life and concerns how the living individual is a subjective unity of manifold objectivity as a purposive and self-sustaining process that has an identity universally permeating its particular constituents. The second moment is the life-process, which shows how this unity sustains and regenerates its identity in the face of non-life by transforming it into its own concept through its own activity. The last moment is called the genus and explains how life elevates its universal identity beyond the level of its particular existence, by means of its relationship with other life. Each moment identifies a different vital process while they together make one unified process, i. e., the Idea of life.

After presenting the internal process, which formulates the living being as a self-relating individual that unites its objective constituents, Hegel talks very briefly about three functions that follow from the self-determining and subjective unity of externality: sensibility, irritability, and reproduction. Hegel speaks of these three capacities as basic functions of the animal organism in the *Philosophy of Nature*, where he lays out the universal forms of life in nature.¹ Given the character of the logical system, the use of the same

¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, translated by A. V. Miller, Oxford, 2004, 357 (§ 352); G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, Frankfurt am Main, 1986 [hereafter cited as *Werke* followed by volume and page number] 9:435.