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## HEGEL AND THE SPECULATIVE COURSE OF FREEDOM

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**Abstract.** The main accent in the article is to show the perspective to understand the idea of freedom as a process, rather than condition. The course of freedom is speculative and the deepest form of Hegel's philosophy. Moreover, it is the solid ground of the mighty systematic thought of the German philosopher. In the light of the highest category of Hegel's logic – The Absolute Idea – the speculative idea of freedom obtains an ontological aspect completely different and even diametrically opposed to spontaneity.

*Keywords:* freedom; speculation; process; Absolute idea

In Hegel's ontology the sequence of the systems of philosophy in history is exactly the same as the sequence throughout the logical deduction of the conceptual definitions of the idea. The history of philosophy is science only when it sees, behind the coherent string of events the logic which guides them<sup>1</sup>). According to Hegel evolution in the history of human kind and its reason, is the progress in *consciousness of freedom* – a progress which fulfills itself by permanent interdependence between theoretical and practical (theory and practice). Consequently, a possibility may occur. The latter consider to swing up and upgrade the idea of freedom. For this aim is necessary to lay and set up the freedom on a pure, theoretical level. From that base the idea of freedom could continue its own course and individual, peculiar process of evolution. Substantially this represents an ontological approach, a *being intention* from the immediate position of freedom to a mediational result; from instant and pure being and abstract universality to the consistent and unpredictable knowledge. That is why the concrete freedom is comprehended and perceived as constant and continuous process. That unabated bilateral dynamic between theoretical and practical, the relevance between them is freedom as a process, an absolute form which combine seemingly contradictional terms and implement the unity of the metaphysical universality and the determination of the real particularity.

Attaching a metaphysical significance to the freedom's practical intention, its new, heuristic theoretical ground could provide an immersion which means in the

same way raising of the previous results, raising the precede level in *consciousness of freedom*. The metaphysical foundations afford an opportunity for evolutionary envelopment of the consciousness, and the abstract principles of freedom could be reduced to unity in clear, concrete manner. Thus, the intention is to attain a totality of the idea of freedom. This may contribute to the construction of a new, entire fundamental conception about man and creation. Therefore, the inner requirement is to find its own, deeper and more extreme principle of freedom.

Freedom explicates the unity of inwardly and outwardly. However, like this unity, it fetches down itself in its definitions and it returns back in itself like absolute identity. That is why freedom is firstly the essence of the absolute and secondly its own manifestation, modality. Hegel writes: "The mode, therefore, is the externality of the absolute, but equally so only its reflection into itself; or again, it is the absolute's own *manifestation*, so that this externalization is its immanent reflection and therefore its being-in-and-for-itself." (Hegel, 2010b: 477).

Freedom manifests itself and in this way is the absolute form. Freedom in Hegel's philosophy is not only a speculative result. It lays deep in the bosom of that reflective paradigmality. In Hegel's manuscript from 1797 with the title "First program about the system of German idealism", he believes in the idea that in future the entire metaphysics must belong to morals, ethical life and practical philosophy. And the first idea is the concept about itself like absolute free being, free man. Ethics has been comprehended as a full system of all ideas, of all practical postulates and metaphysics is only its feature, a detail. Right here where is the embryology of Hegel's systematic thought, the base of speculative course of freedom occurred. In these early ideas Hegel announces himself against Kant and his *Ethical Rigorism*, against the notorious "you must" which lead to enslavement of man, rather than freedom, to inevitable bifurcation between "*which is*" and "*which must be*" (Donchev, 1982: 30)<sup>2</sup>. On this occasion an ascertainment of G. Donchev seems profound and sagacious. He thinks that in his ethical perceptions, in his ethical thought Hegel is more relevant to Aristotle and the *Eudemonism*, than to Kant<sup>3</sup>. Hegel's special relation to Kant's practical philosophy and the transition in his comprehension of the Christian religion, in a sense presuppose and provide the favorable intellectual climate to put through already one strong, general and directional idea which may attach a systematic nature of his thought. Hegel show his respect to Kant's ethics mostly in the early writings and works of theology, somewhere around the end of eighteenth century. These essays have a heuristic ideas and one is to emphasize the striving towards "overcoming of abstract universality to whom one's individuality must obey. Human being should have the opportunity to develop and open absolutely free his constructive and creative energies and to look for, to seek after that which is his own unconditional right – happiness" (Donchev, 1982: 27)<sup>4</sup>.

These early manuscripts of Hegel uncover one of the most significant and fruitful idea which forwards to the mightiness of the individuality and the subjective nature of the religion; to one's own determination to the question about the unity of "*being*

in itself” and “being for itself”, without the necessity of an external negotiator. Thus Hegel shove out freedom beyond “the must”, “the need”. To Hegel, the aspiration to happiness is not chasing a blank pleasures and satisfactions, the happiness itself is not in a bound only with the sensible aspect. Primarily it is dictated by the reason. The light of the thoughts, according to Hegel, is the only capable to guide the man to happiness. Thereby, the great German philosopher discovers the course of *ethical life* which incorporates legitimacy administrate by the positive right, and the moral of the inner soul. Almost in parallel a turning point is realized in Hegel’s understanding about Kant’s doctrine for the postulates of practical reason, and his regard to the Christian religion. In the first case, the positive evaluation turns into critic; in the second case the original critical relation proceeds to affirmative. That happens somewhere between Hegel’s residence in the *Spiritual academy* in Tübingen, and the end of *Frankfurt’s period*, to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Kant’s “you must” and Jesus’s “love your neighbor as yourself” become the corner stone to Hegel. He put them on the scales in his manuscript – “*The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate*”, from 1798 – 1799. There, the German philosopher contradicts “the Moral of Jesus – Love” and “Kant’s Law – the Categorical Imperative” (Donchev, 1982: 23 – 30). Still here the speculative course of freedom is made between *the finite* and *the infinite*, the transition of *Law* to *Love* and the affirmation of the latter as law. The moral of Jesus is subjective and targeted against the power of the objective. The doctrine of Jesus presupposes a division of this “*which is* (the human soul and its actions)”, and those “*which must be* (the requirement regulated and manipulated from outside)”. “Love your neighbor as yourself” is not an ordinance and law which come from outside; it is a *process* of inner inspiration and spiritualization, of the power of the Spirit, a self-sufficiency born in the individuality itself and embodied like own law. This is how at the doorstep of the nineteenth century the strongest and the most powerful systematic thought in European philosophy, is formed in Hegel’s consciousness. Furthermore, Hegel’s systematic thought is substantially defined and based on the idea of freedom. Along with the outspread of Hegel’s systematic thinking, the realization and materialization of the idea of freedom begins. The latter embodies the highest level of humanism. Somewhere all this is explicitly expressed and signified; while at some place is implicitly comprised and initiatory conditioned in the supreme achievement of the great German philosopher from that time – “Phenomenology of Spirit”. The composition is astonishingly revolutionary and comprises a variety of beneficial ideas. Hegel presents a vigorous expression, a manifestation anteriorly to the idea of freedom. Thus, the famous and noted *Preface* to the “Phenomenology of Spirit” which is written after the completion (more precisely at the end) of the composition, is the highest level of Hegel’s speculative and metaphysical thought; a magnificent march to the Truth, Freedom, God. Still over 1802 – 1803 in the previous announcement about publishing *The Critical Journal of Philosophy* (which is developed together with Shelling), the

first key and directorial ideas about the *System of Science* matured. They stand in direct connection, in deep relation with Hegel's comprehension and consciousness of freedom: "... a time has come, when the true science began to step in itself and thereby to constitute the vital center of concentration, to insulate itself forever from this, which is called non-philosophy..." (Donchev, 1982: 56)<sup>5</sup>. One of the essential parts from the distinguished *Preface*, is concerned exactly with this matter to explicit the intention of the science, to push through the idea of philosophy as the true science and its own method which is completely different from mathematical methods and methods in history. Hegel points out that "The inward emergence, or the coming-to-be, of substance is an undivided transition into the external, that is, into existence, into being for another, and conversely, the coming-to-be of existence is its taking-itself-back into essence" (Hegel, 2010a: 36).

The veritable speculative course of freedom continues through this profound *Preface*. While in his earlier writings, where Hegel is concerned chiefly with the political atmosphere and social situation in Germany and Europe, the idea of freedom – largely caused from The Great French revolution – is, I could say in its spontaneity. However, further on in "Phenomenology of Spirit" this immediacy of the idea of freedom is filled with life, with being. Already in the profound introduction to the "Phenomenology of Spirit" the whole and complete idea is evident. The latter comprises mostly the intention to develop philosophy itself as a release and unloose the spirit from the bifurcation between "*The self*" and "*The substance*", between thought and object, as "... the process which creates its own moments and passes through them all; it is the whole movement that constitutes the positive and its truth" (Hegel, 2010a: 40). This coming-to-be of the logic and the science in general which is accomplished by the *Phenomenology*, is the release of consciousness from its immediacy and spontaneity, its own awareness and transformation into *self-consciousness*, *reason*, *spirit*, *religion* and *absolute knowledge*. This *process* of disengagement has its distinctive particularity, and it is an expression of deep and essential dialectical regularity, that the *process* of disengagement, the freedom as a *process* – rather than stiffness – is not a unilateral movement only ahead into its own justification; it is at the same time a return backward into its own grounds, or that "every step ahead in the process of justification at the same time means a step backward into its grounds, into the primordial and authentic which has given the beginning (the principle) of the process, and has retained itself like immanent base in the whole course of its development" (Donchev). The introduction to the *Lectures on the history of philosophy* (more specifically where Hegel presents *philosophy as the apprehension of the development of the Concrete*) explicates the same intention of the Idea: "This development goes no further out than into externality, but the going without itself of development also is a going inwards. That is to say, the universal Idea continues to remain at the foundation and still is the allembicing and unchangeable" (Hegel, 1894: 28). The undetermined Idea in its *process*, i.e. progress, in course of

its development becomes “determined within itself”. The self-conscious freedom becomes a reality narrowly when the veracious is grasped and signified, not only as a substance, but also as an individual, a subject. The direction is to break away and uproot the “non-darkened identity” and the union of the abstract universality, where its nature – “*being for itself*” – is not taken into account. But, the individual become a developed and cultured reason, and thereby “*for itself*”, a materialized “*in itself*”; this is “the self-conscious freedom which is at rest within itself, a freedom which has not set the opposition off to one side and left it merely lying there but has been reconciled with it” (Hegel, 2010a: 18). And the human being, not only passively contemplate the supersensible postulate. In the reconciliation with it and through it, it actively participates in the movement of the spirit, in the movement of the concept. The speculative is supersensible and principle, mentally productive and provocative, regarding the form and content, and man has an internal relation with the action of the concept. Precisely here man’s freedom proceeds.

The nature of the finite consist of, in the *process* of “*coming-to-be*” (a priori immanent synthesis), of passing into something else. The entire pure speculative philosophy, the logic is based on that *process*<sup>6)</sup>; it is the method of philosophy which rests on the own, independent necessity of the notion and its movement. *The Absolute knowledge*, as a result of the Phenomenology and the unloose of the consciousness, sets the overcoming of the abstract element of immediacy (the logic consist of a phenomenological premise), thereby the indivisibility of *the being and knowledge*. The phenomenology of spirit presents the course of the soul, its movement to the true, to the absolute knowledge; the course of the natural consciousness to the spirit. And it seems like return from the side of that experience of the consciousness, the logical is covered, and whose nature is presented like the opposite course, like stimulate and animate the spirit, like the showing of God. After the course of the soul to the spirit and the phenomenology, it shows through the bigger capacity and content, the profundity and broad meaning of the logical: “Only after a more profound acquaintance with the other sciences does logic rise for subjective spirit from a merely abstract universal to a universal that encompasses within itself the riches of the particular” (Hegel, 2010b: 37).

In conclusion, the accentuation might be on the way that freedom as a *process* is not an ordinary aim of the finite to the infinite, to the absolute. The problematic course is to see the freedom as a *process*, as The Absolute idea itself, as the most concrete and sovereign category of “The Science of Logic”. The freedom embodies within itself the identity of theoretical and practical, which beside as a transition of the one to the other, is the reasonable concept. The latter as a reality combines itself only within itself, and creates its own being as intransitive nature, i.e. infinity. The construction and the operation of the Hegel’s mighty systematic thought, is in deep relation with the idea of freedom. By means of, the determination of that vigorous thought, the freedom as spontaneity and a frame of mind, a pure condition, might be improved and

elaborated. As it was shown earlier in the article, the whole idea of freedom is evident still in the *Preface* to the “Phenomenology of Spirit”. However, the latter is not just some kind of simple introduction to the great work of the philosopher. It comprises and embodies Hegel’s most powerful ideas. One of them is the idea of freedom, the freedom as metaphysical category, the freedom which might knob out somewhere as spontaneity, but this spontaneity is actually a result of a profound mediation. Generally, the whole *Preface* is widely accepted as the deepest metaphysical text in the entire history of philosophy. The understanding, the idea of freedom in this way, as a function of the highest speculative category of Hegel’s logic, might give a solid ground for a different comprehension of the entire philosophical system of the great German thinker, precisely as *Philosophy of freedom*.

#### NOTES

1. Donchev, 1982: 187.
2. Translated from Bulgarian.
3. Ibidem.
4. Translated from Bulgarian.
5. Translated from Bulgarian.
6. K. Rosenkranz explicit this essential intention in Hegel’s thought, on his commentary on Hegel’s Science of Logic in The Journal of Speculative Philosophy (Rosenkranz, 1872: 98)

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